

An ecclesiastical controversy /

J.B. Turner

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AN

ECCLESIASTICAL CONTROVERSY:

CONTAINING THE

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

HON. JOHN B. TURNER,

MEMBER OF THE FIRST PARISH,

AND

REV. DANIEL WIGHT, JR.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH

IN

SCITUATE, MASS.

WITH AN APPENDIX AND NOTES.

BOSTON:

SAMUEL N. DICKINSON, PRINTER.

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PREFACE.

TRUTH ever seeks the light and courts investigation, while the more it is examined the brighter it shines. *Error*, on the contrary, ever seeks the shades, and vanishes on the approach of true light. It is believed that the correctness of these obvious principles, is in some degree illustrated and enforced in the following pages.

The principal questions at issue in this discussion, are the following:—First, whether or not the charge of ‘false statements,’ alleged against Rev. Mr. Deane’s account of ‘The Separation,’ given in his ‘History of Scituate,’ is sustained; Secondly, whether or not Rev. Mr. Thomas was properly dismissed as *Pastor* of the First Church in Scituate, in April, 1825; Thirdly, who are *now* the true First Church of Christ, in Scituate; and, finally, whether the *Orthodox* or *Unitarians* have the moral and just claim to the funds (a part or the whole) now in the hands of the Unitarian Church and Society. As all these points have been contested, it is important that they should be decided truly, and with justice to all parties concerned, and that without delay. The unsettled and agitated state of such questions, must alike disturb the peace, good-will, and prosperity of any community so involved.

The Correspondence has been much protracted, in consequence of a most unjust and uncalled for attack upon our Puritan fathers, and especially the early ministers, relative to their conduct in the Indian war and the Salem witchcraft. These points have been dragged in, as it would seem, without the least provocation, and to no purpose, except it be to malign and abuse a class of the most worthy men that have lived in all modern times. Such attempts, however, have usually recoiled with a tenfold power, upon the persons who have had the effrontery thus unjustly to assail them.

The Notes were not contained in the original letters, but have been since appended; not, however, because the points were left defenceless and weak on the side of ‘The Church,’ but that the truth might be more fully illustrated and speedily established. Some of them have been added, to give information on important subjects, intimately connected with the discussion.

In the preface to our ‘Church Manual’ it was observed, after alluding to its origin and design, ‘that we disclaim any intention to awaken controversy, or to continue it, if awakened.’ We believed that ‘the candid, unvarnished statement of well-attested facts,’ therein contained, was designed and well adapted to allay controversy—to show all concerned the truth, and thus ‘to settle the question on its true basis.’ The following discussion, it is believed, clearly proves that those facts *were* ‘well-attested,’ as not one of them has suffered by the assault—they have rather gained additional strength and clearness from the investigation, while other new and

important facts have been educed — a valuable legacy to posterity. It will be seen from all the circumstances, that this controversy was unsolicited on our part, though not feared. In the way of pastoral duties, the 'Church Manual' was prepared; it has been assailed and defended, but with no small intrusion upon my other important and delightful duties. Should further assaults be made, I do not promise further replies, — I am no controversialist, — I desire peace, but peace with the truth. Should the assault, however, be renewed, it is earnestly hoped that it may fall into more able and leisure hands.

It is with reluctance that many of the painful facts herein stated, are submitted to the public, and they should even now be withheld, did not *long-abused justice* call for their publication. If severity in any degree has been employed, it is believed to be the severity of truth only, and of that truth which the public and posterity have a right to demand. If censure fall, therefore, let it fall on the deserving.

My correspondent had called upon me to 'retract my deliberate charge of falsehood against Rev. Mr. Deane, and to make the retraction as *public* as I had made the charge.' But he had also promised, to 'join with me in condemning the falsehoods, and in making them public,' were they successfully pointed out. I had accordingly suggested this duty in my last, by referring to his promise, and also by saying 'if you and I cannot decide, the public must.' He virtually acknowledges the false statements, in his last, though evidently with some reluctance, but says nothing about joining in the publication. It is often said, that 'silence gives consent;' and perhaps in this case it is all I could expect. With these considerations before me, together with the earnest request of many, and the advice and approval of others, I submit these attempts to advance the cause of truth and righteousness to the candor and decision of an impartial public, with mingled feelings of reluctance, cheerfulness, and hope.

SCITUATE, Jan. 1845.

P. S. — Since this work was sent to the press for publication, I have heard incidentally, from an influential person, who has read the Correspondence, that I have been *misinformed* in regard to some of the things therein stated. This may be so; but I will here say, that I have received this information in general, so far as it relates to 'The Separation,' from Church Records made at the time, or from persons ('good, pious, honest men,') who were present and took an active part in the scenes described, or from those who were personally acquainted with the individuals and facts of which they speak. And I would inquire, who are most likely to be misinformed, — those who receive information from eyewitnesses and written documents, or those who receive it merely from hearsay, — perhaps second, third, or fourth hand? All agree, that the minority — 'the liberal part of the Church, did not' generally 'attend the Church meetings.'

TESTIMONIALS.

The following important Testimonies in favor of the 'Church Manual,' often referred to in this Correspondence, are here prefixed. It will be seen by referring to the 'Manual' that they are furnished by the only surviving Pastors of the Ecclesiastical Council at Scituate, in April, 1825. Rev. Mr. Thomas was Moderator, and Rev. Mr. Perkins Scribe of that Council.

WE, the subscribers, having been more or less intimately acquainted with the history of the First Church in Scituate, from the date of its difficulties with its Pastor, Rev. Mr. Thomas, in 1825, and having carefully read the 'Church Manual,' recently prepared and published by Rev. Mr. Wight, can say, with great confidence and cheerfulness, that the statements therein made correspond entirely with our impressions and convictions of the truth in the case. In our opinion, the publication of the 'Manual' is seasonable, and important to the vindication of men, who, in the spirit of our 'Pilgrim fathers,' dared to encounter obloquy and reproach, and to make many and great sacrifices of ease and property, in defence of 'the faith once delivered to the saints.' It is important, too, as a testimony to future generations, of the views entertained by men of clear minds and a pure spirit, who were yet laymen in humble circumstances, of the principles of ecclesiastical order and discipline, on which the Congregational churches of New England originally stood, and still stand. And most cordially do we commend it to the attentive consideration of all into whose hands it may fall.

RICHARD S. STORRS,
JONAS PERKINS.

BRAINTREE, Nov. 18, 1844.

ABINGTON, Jan. 20, 1845.

Rev. Mr. Wight,

Dear Sir: In your letter to me, you request an expression of my views on certain points therein named. In reply, I am free to say that I have no doubt of the seasonableness, propriety, and importance of the publication of your 'Church Manual,' which, in my opinion, was called for by the existing state of things in your place and vicinity, in regard to those matters which are there treated of, and concerning which there has been so much misapprehension and misrepresentation. It is my belief that the 'Manual' sets those things in a true light.

And in particular I here express my firm belief in the correctness of the statements therein made of the facts in respect to the 'Separation' in the year 1825, and of the dismission, by vote of a majority of the Church, of their Pastor, the Rev. Nehemiah Thomas.

For, in the first place, I am clear that churches have authority to dismiss, by vote, their Pastors, or to dissolve their pastoral relation to them, and that

they are to be justified in so doing, whenever there are good reasons for such dissolution. This principle, which is contained in the 'Platform,' was recognized by the Council at Scituate, in 1825, has been recognized by other ecclesiastical councils, and agrees with the usages of Congregational churches.

And in the second place, I am sure, that the First Church in Scituate acted in accordance with the above-mentioned principle, and in a regular manner, in voting the dismissal of their Pastor, already named; and that their vote did, to all intents and purposes, dissolve his pastoral relation to them.

I believe too, that their conduct in taking those decisive and important steps, namely, the separation and dissolution, ought to have been commended by all concerned, as it has been and will continue to be by such as, in the spirit of the Puritan fathers of New England, 'earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.'

Yours truly,
DANIEL THOMAS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SCITUATE, Aug. 21, 1844.

Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr.

Dear Sir: In the preface of a 'Church Manual,' prepared, I suppose, by you, and lately published, I find the following. 'The occasion of this long unsettled dispute has doubtless arisen ['principally,' left out] from ignorance of these facts, in connection with *false statements* made in the history of the town.'

Not being able to find any 'false statements' in Mr. Deane's 'History of Scituate,' on the subject of 'The Separation,' I respectfully request you to point them out to me in writing.

Mr. Deane was a resident in Scituate as a minister of the gospel at the time, and, many years before and after the separation, must have been familiar with all the facts in the case; and if 'false statements' are made on that subject, they must have been made knowingly, a crime of which I have heretofore thought Mr. Deane incapable; but if you will point them out, so that I can find them, however much I may be pained by so total a change of opinion respecting the character of Mr. Deane, I will join with you in condemning the falsehoods and in making them public.

The charge of making 'false statements' is a grave charge, deeply affecting the moral character of the person making them; entirely destroying his character as a Christian and a gentleman, and no Christian or gentleman ought to make this charge against another, without being able to point out the reasons therefor.

With great respect,

JOHN B. TURNER.

SCITUATE, Aug. 24, 1844.

To J. B. Turner, Esq.

Dear Sir: I received yesterday, through the post-office, a communication from you, requesting me to point out in writing

certain 'false statements,' alleged by me to be found in Rev. Mr. Deane's 'History of Scituate,' in regard to 'The Separation.'

On receiving this communication, I prepared a somewhat full reply; but on further reflection, must beg the privilege of withholding it for the present, as I understand a reply is to be made to our 'Church Manual,' in which this charge is found. We had repeatedly solicited the privilege of consulting the ancient records of our Church, now in the hands of Rev. E. Q. Sewall, but were denied the privilege, after one very brief perusal, on the ground, 'it was feared we were about to publish something to the injury — of a party concerned — and they did not wish to assist us by furnishing *facts*.' This was the reason, substantially, as near as I can recollect. We now say, that we do not wish to furnish materials for the forthcoming reply, which may, with more propriety, be reserved till after that reply shall appear. I will say, however, that the 'charge' respecting 'false statements' was not made without deliberation, and I stand ready to point them out, (as I think I can do, to the satisfaction of every candid, unprejudiced mind,) as soon as the anticipated reply shall be published; or, if I have been misinformed in respect to such a reply being published, and you will inform me as to this fact, I will forward my now reserved communication immediately.

Yours truly, with great respect,

DANIEL WIGHT, JR.

SCITUATE, Aug. 27, 1844.

Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr.

Dear Sir: I received yours of the 24th, last Saturday evening, and in reply can answer, that, so far as I know and believe, no reply is intended to your 'Church Manual.' My own feelings in that respect are, that if you truly and sincerely believe your services will be more acceptable to God by claiming to be the *first* Church, or even the *only* Church, I have no wish to dispute either or both, but should you make the claim from motives of pride or vanity — the *honor* of being called the first Church or only Church — you might be easily met on either claim. As I cannot think you make the claim from the latter motives, I pass the subject.

I thought, on reading your preface, that, unless you had found something in Mr. Deane's 'History of Scituate,' more than had met my eye, you had made an assertion you ought not to have done, to the injury of his moral character and disreputable to his memory, which I fondly cherish, having been on terms of friendship, (and, considering our different walks in life,) I might even say intimacy with him when living. I cannot feel willing that his character or memory should be injured without sufficient cause. This induced me to write to you, and not, as your letter

would seem to imply, that I am one of a conspiracy to draw something from you to be used to the injury of your Society. So far am I from this, that, could I promote the good of your Society, without injury to others, I would do it with as much alacrity as I granted a warrant for its organization.

With great respect,

JOHN B. TURNER.

SCITUATE, Aug. 23, 1844.

To J. B. Turner, Esq.

Dear Sir: I have just received your communication, inquiring into the truth or falsity of a certain charge, made by me in the preface to our 'Church Manual,' respecting 'false statements made in the history of the town,' touching the subject of 'The Separation.'

If I have been led to make a false charge, I can assure you it was wholly unintentional, and when it shall be pointed out and *established*, I hope I shall be willing to acknowledge the crime and repent of it. What I have written in respect to this subject has been written with deliberation, and I trust with candor, not to *injure* any individual or body of individuals, but to *benefit*. It is in this aspect I view your own communication. It is not truth, but error, which injures mankind. Truth is 'a pearl of great price,' and should you convince me of error and lead me to see the truth, I should still feel that *I* had gained an important victory, as well as *you*. The truth—not error—will bear investigation. I rejoice that any are disposed to examine the subject proposed in your letter, and thank you, dear Sir, most heartily, for your kind attention and inquiry.

I will here simply state, that in our 'Manual,' we did not wish to assume a *controversial* aspect, though necessity was laid upon us to do so in some degree; we might have said much more, but this desire restrained us. Hence, we did not point out more definitely those 'false statements' referred to. But, at your request, I now cheerfully point them out, as I find them presented to me in authentic records, made at the time, by persons acting in those scenes which they describe. Being eyewitnesses of what they record, I must believe their united testimony to be true, even in preference to that of the Rev. Mr. Deane, who was not an eyewitness (as I suppose); at least, I must believe them true till clearly shown to be false by satisfactory evidence.

You will find the 'false statements,' to which I more particularly referred, on page 58 of Mr. Deane's 'History,' in the following paragraph:

'In A. D. 1824, a number of persons in the First Church and Society, became desirous to introduce a Church Covenant, which recognized the doctrine of the Trinity; but not having a majority

of the Church, and having less than one fourth of the Parish, which were ready to favor their views at that time, they seceded and formed a new Society.'

If I can rely on the authentic 'Records,' referred to above, I think I can show at least *two*, if not *three* 'false statements,' in this one paragraph.

First, it is said, 'A number of persons in the First Church and Society became desirous to *introduce* a church covenant, which recognized the doctrine of the Trinity,' &c. This was not the fact, if our 'Records' are true. The covenant here referred to was adopted, word for word, by this same First Church, March 12, 1710-11, and, at the time referred to, *this Church had already stood on that covenant* for more than a century. Furthermore, this same Church actually *renewed* this covenant at a church meeting, regularly notified by the Pastor, and over which he presided in person, Feb. 6, 1825. At an adjourned meeting, the Church also '*voted*, That the Rev. Mr. Thomas be requested to transcribe *the covenant* found on the old church book on the present church book.' That covenant I have seen on the *old records*, and this is the very covenant on which our Church now stands, as renewed Feb. 6, 1825.*

It appears, that this covenant had been, for a time, neglected by their then present Pastor, and that the Church regarded themselves in a 'loose state,' both in regard to their *Covenant* and *Confession of Faith*. Feeling this to be their condition, 'a large majority of the Church,' signed a communication to the Pastor, requesting him to appoint a meeting for the purpose of investigating this subject. They were led to examine the 'Records,' and 'having found an old covenant on the church records, on which this Church has stood for more than a century, to which some of the brethren wished to pay further attention, it was therefore voted to adjourn said meeting to the 25th of December.' See 'Manual,' for proceedings and results.

Now I ask, in view of all the facts, does Mr. Deane's 'History' give a correct view of the subject? Would not an impartial and candid reader suppose, from his statement, that the Church had previously been Unitarian, from time immemorial; at least, that it had not been Trinitarian; and now, for the first time, some few, — 'a number,' — wished for some innovation, to introduce something new, namely, a church covenant, which recognized the doctrine of the Trinity? I ask, in all candor, if such be not

* *Dark lines* are drawn around the sentence, expressing the doctrine of the *Trinity* in this covenant, as recorded on the old 'Records.' I am informed by one who was a member of this Church at the time, that Mr. Thomas told him, in company with another member, now deceased, that these lines were drawn by Rev. Mr. Deane, who said that the doctrine was *not true*, and therefore ought to be *erased*! The dark lines are there, and such is the testimony; whether true or false, and, if true, by what authority this erasure was made, the 'Records' ought to inform us.

the representation, — if such be not the natural impression, from reading Mr. Deane's statement, — and I ask if it be not *false*? Was not this a Trinitarian Church when established, in 1634? Again, in 1710–11. when our present church covenant was *adopted*; and again in February, 1825, when that covenant was *renewed*, word for word? And did not this same Trinitarian Church secede from the old Society, in April, 1825? If so, are we not still not only the First *Trinitarian* Church of Christ in Scituate, but the *First Church* in Scituate? I do not ask for civil law to decide such a question, but do not the facts, the Bible, and common sense so decide?

Secondly. Mr. Deane says, 'But not having a majority of the Church, — which were ready to favor their views,' &c. As we have seen, the Trinitarian covenant was regularly *renewed* and adopted by the Church more than two months previous to the secession. Could it have been thus renewed and adopted, without a majority acting in its favor? Or is it said, only a part of the Church was present? I am not aware that this was the fact; but, if so, why was not another meeting called, and the vote reconsidered? Indeed, other meetings were called, and confirmed that vote. It is most evident, that *a clear majority of the Church* were in favor of the old covenant, — not a new one introduced, — both from the fact, that a majority acted in favor of Mr. Thomas's dismissal, and that several others of the minority soon after withdrew and united with Trinitarian churches. Again, I ask, in view of these facts, if it be *true*, that they had not 'a majority of the Church,' 'which were ready to favor their views at that time?' Then is Mr. Deane's statement false.

Thirdly. The secession and formation of the new Society is represented as taking place at that time, namely, in 1824, but which did *not* till April, 1825. This, I know, is immaterial, but is, nevertheless, a false statement.

I now ask, in conclusion, if I had not strong reasons for the charge I have made? I know it is a 'grave charge,' and one I would not make for my right hand, without just cause in my own mind. I know I may be mistaken, — I was not on the ground, as you say Rev. Mr. Deane was, but the testimony is clear and abundant, both from written documents and from numerous persons, with whom I am acquainted, and whom I must regard as persons of truth, till proved false. You are aware, Dear Sir, that there is prejudice, and there is interest, connected with this subject. Why can we not speak out the convictions of the heart? It will. — it must all, one day be disclosed, — to our shame, if we hide the light, — to our honor, if we stand by the truth. As the Pastor of this Church, I cannot but feel interested in its welfare, temporally as well as spiritually. The world know our wrongs, and the wrongs suffered by numerous other churches similarly situated, and the world condemn

the course, though they still cling to it. They may succeed and prosper for a time, but, Sir, alas for their end! But I will not add.

You have requested of me a written reply. Shall I ask too much in requesting the same, giving your candid opinion on the subject, and especially pointing out my errors, if such you still find.

I am, Dear Sir, with great respect,

Your humble servant,

DANIEL WIGHT, Jr.

P. S.—Aug. 28, 1844. The preceding pages were penned previously to the note I sent you on Saturday last, as an answer in part to your first communication. In view of your second, which I received last evening, I have a few remarks to add. And first, I will observe, I did not intend to imply in my last, that you were ‘one of a (formal) conspiracy to draw something from me to be used to the injury of our Society,’ but that, should such a communication have been sent, and afterward a reply be made to our ‘Church Manual,’ as was expected, from certain reports abroad, it would have been no very strange thing, had that communication been heard from, and perused by others than yourself, and that too without the least blame or impropriety on your part.

I have a word to say, with regard to the *motives* you suggest, as influencing me in defending our claims to the title of *First Church of Christ in Scituate*;—we have never thought, or intended to imply, that ours was the ‘only church’ in Scituate. I must acknowledge, that I was not a little surprised that (after an attentive perusal of our ‘Church Manual’) you should suggest all, or either of the motives you mention, to the neglect of the only one we have presented, and that on which, if I know my own heart, we rest our only claim,—that of truth and justice. I believe, Sir, you have entirely mistaken the character of your correspondent, if you suppose him even capable of entertaining, for a moment, such motives as either of those you seem to insinuate. And it may not be improper here to observe, that the moral character of the living should be held sacred as well as that of the dead, till we can establish our charge, or the propriety even of insinuations. And now I have one favor to ask, if you have the time, and are disposed to grant it, namely, that, after perusing my present communications, you will do me the kindness again to peruse our ‘Manual,’ and point out to me in writing any erroneous statements it may contain, if such there be. I am not aware that there is such a statement in it. It was my most earnest desire and effort, to give a fair and impartial statement of well-attested facts, believing that such a statement was demanded by the existing state of feeling in our midst. If I have erred, I should be happy to learn my errors, and have them pointed out. You, or any one else, will truly show me a great kindness in so doing.

I need not add, in regard to the fact of 'false statements made in the history of the town,' as I believe those are clearly pointed out and established in the enclosed paper. I will only say, that I have no desire to injure the character or memory of the departed, but must still believe that truth and justice should prevail among the living, even though it be found necessary, however painful, to disclose even the crimes of the dead.

I remain, yours, &c.

SCITUATE, Sept. 3, 1844.

Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr.,

Dear Sir: Your letter of Aug. 23, and postscript of Aug. 28, came duly to hand through the post-office. I hardly know where to begin a reply, but will take your postscript first. I am sorry you should take any thing I have written as an attack upon your character. I wrote first, simply inquiring concerning Mr. Deane's 'History,' and, after receiving a letter from you, replied that I had no knowledge of a reply to your 'Church Manual,' and intended to convey an idea, that with good intentions I considered your claim of being the First Church of little consequence, — that the laws of the land would remain, be your claim what it might. I intended no offence, and can assure you that it never has been my aim, nor can I think it is my character, to cut to the right and left, amongst the characters of those who differ in opinion from me, whether living or dead.

I had no intention of reviewing your 'Manual,' as my letters to you may show; but as you request me to 'point out to you in writing any erroneous statements it may contain,' I will glance at one or two things among several which seem strange to me.

On page 6, you say 'Mr. Thomas was dismissed,' &c. Dismissed by whom? Not by his Church and Society, for he continued their beloved and respected pastor until his death. It must, therefore, have been done by those not belonging to his Church and Society. A certificate that they were not members of the First Parish, which includes the Church connected with it, is in the hands of the parish clerk, certifying that they had formed themselves into another Society. This is dated April 15, 1825, and it appears by your 'Manual,' that they dismissed Mr. Thomas on the 29th of April, fourteen days after they had availed themselves of the laws of the land and left the First Church and Society, and according to the same laws had no further action or control in the First Parish or the Church connected with it. They might, therefore, with as much propriety, have dismissed Mr. Flint, of Cohasset, or any other minister in the Commonwealth.

On page 14, after stating that 'they still call themselves the First Church,' you say, 'an appeal from the moral and ecclesiastical law to the civil, ["which recognizes no distinction between a church and a society," left out,] as a claim to this title, must be

regarded as wholly futile, by all who regard the laws of God as superior to the laws of man.' Here are things asserted and implied, to which I cannot agree. That the civil law is in opposition to the law of God, and that the ecclesiastical laws are the laws of God. To this I cannot assent. Ecclesiastical laws are nothing more than the production of assemblies of divines, — decrees of councils or synods, unauthorized to enact.* Assemblies composed, no doubt, of grave divines, learned ministers, and pious men, perhaps, but still fallible men, as liable to err as others, and with a spice of the domineering spirit (formerly somewhat prevalent) even more so. I will cite you two instances from the history of our country, in which I believe such men did grossly err.

When the grandson of Massasoit, — the Indian prince who received 'the pilgrims' with open arms, — was always their friend in need, fell into the hands of our ancestors, the question was, what should be done with this innocent boy of some ten or twelve years. As ministers mostly controlled, both in church and state at that time, some of them (the most learned and pious, I suppose, and perhaps the same who made your ecclesiastical laws,) were applied to in the case, and by their decision, which they supported by many Scripture quotations, this unoffending child was sold to hopeless slavery in Bermuda.

The witchcraft delusion, according to history, got up and carried on by ministers, to sustain and increase their then waning power, a few years before the date of the church-covenant, you mention, † and which will always be a stain on the fair name of Massachusetts, is another instance. What hand the actors in these things had in establishing your ecclesiastical laws, I do not know, but, from their reputation as leaders, probably great. Here was a series of cold-blooded murders, as I believe. They would call a person a witch, and then hang him because they called him so. How many suffered an ignominious death in consequence of this lust of power — this priestly ambition, I do not know, but believe some forty or fifty.' 'John Proctor,

* Has Christ given to his Church no authority? Has he laid down no principles, by which it is to be regulated? Must it, therefore, be controlled, in all its offices and duties, and order and discipline, by the civil power? 'Supreme and lordly power over all the churches upon earth, doth only belong to Jesus Christ, who is King of the Church, and the Head thereof.' 'Subordinate church power, under Christ, delegated to them [professed believers] by him, doth belong to them, in such a manner as is before expressed, (chap. 5, sec. 2,) and as flowing from the very *nature* and *essence* of a church; it being natural unto all bodies, and so unto a church body, to be furnished with sufficient power for its own preservation and subsistence.' — *Camb. Plat.* chap. 10, secs. 1 and 2.

† 'It' [witchcraft] 'was the common faith of Christendom, and had been for hundreds of years.' — *Prof. Pond.*

who foresaw his doom, and knew from whom the danger came, sent an earnest petition, not to the governor and council, but to Cotton Mather, and the ministers.' Cotton Mather took one of 'the possessed' into his family, and from her learned many curious things of the invisible world; the most important of which were, that 'demons could not enter his study or touch his person.' But, unfortunately for him, and others engaged with him,* the doctrine that witches were common; that the study of a clergyman was a sanctuary, to which resort might be had to escape the devil; and their persons so holy, that demons could have no power over them; did not continue, if it ever became an article of religious faith. If it had, here would have been an engine of clerical power, at least, equal to the Catholic confessional.

Now you cannot but agree with me, that, in these cases, although grave and learned divines† pronounced these doings strictly according to the laws of God, — produced texts of Scripture plentifully, to prove their assertions in the one case, and denounced vengeance on all who presumed to dispute them in the other, still they were mistaken. The laws of God and the dictates of reason and common sense condemn the proceedings in both cases. Shall we take laws, made by such characters, as the laws of God? I cannot. The assertion that laws prepared by such men, or any other men, are the laws of God does not make them so, even if that assertion is made by a clergyman in a 'Church Manual.'

The human mind was, perhaps, at its lowest state of abasement, when Luther arose, — the day-star preceding the dawn. The feudal system and long years of priestly rule, had brought it to its darkest night of degradation and superstition. Since then it has (with temporary relapses) been continually advancing in the knowledge of truth, both civil and religious. It will continue to progress, nor can king-craft or priest-craft prevent it. The worthy Robinson, at Leyden, (ahead of the age in which he lived,) saw this, when he enjoined it on his people not to stand still with Luther and Calvin, but to be ready to receive truth from other sources ‡. Since the settlement of this country, one superstition after another has fallen before the progress of truth, but there is still room for further progression. It was once, in New England, gravely enacted, that 'no person should make mince-pies, under penalty of ten shillings;' that 'no woman

* 'Mr.' [Cotton] 'Mather expresses the opinion, that the *judges* proceeded too far, and were chargeable with mistakes, particularly in respect to the kind of evidence which they admitted.'—*Prof. Pond*.

† Judges, and the 'learned' in other professions, pronounced the same opinion. 'Sir Wm. Blackstone, the great oracle of British law, who died no longer ago than 1750, declared his belief in witchcraft.'—*Prof. Pond*.

‡ 'From the written Word of God.'—*Robinson*.

should kiss her child on the Sabbath or fasting-day, under penalty of five shillings.' Now, no one, I believe, thinks mince-pies hurtful to the soul, whatever they may be to the body, and a mother kisses her child on the Sabbath, without thinking she has grievously offended the God of love.

I think you must acknowledge this progress, since the time the grandson of Massasoit was sold a slave, and since the 22d of Sept., 1692, when 'Noyes, the minister of Salem,' while exulting over the dead bodies of eight innocent persons, called by him *witches, cried, 'There hang eight firebrands of hell.' Now, so far am I from admitting that decrees of assemblies of divines of this age and this stamp are the laws of God, that I do not admit they are entitled to the least consideration.

I say nothing of the moral law, for I can see no possible way it can have any bearing on the number of your church. If you say it is immoral to refuse to call it the first, because it violates the ecclesiastical laws we have been reviewing, I can say it is more immoral to call it the first, in violation of the civil law. †

Again, assertions or insinuations that the civil laws are contrary to the laws of God, does not make them so. Human legislation is, I grant, imperfect, and inexpedient laws are sometimes made, but no legislature in Massachusetts would dare enact laws to clash with the Divine laws. Although the clergy do not now, as in the days of the Blue laws, control legislation, or guide the interpretation of the law, the cord between church and state having been severed years ago, still I cannot believe the people of Massachusetts would permit a law, manifestly contrary to the laws of God, to stand on their statute-books an instant.

The days have gone by when the decrees of ecclesiastical councils—decrees of men authorized only to advise, will be generally received and obeyed in opposition to the laws made and interpreted by the authorities appointed by the constitution of government. The men composing such councils are no longer generally regarded with awe and reverence as more than human. They now are only esteemed and loved as their characters may be estimable and lovely. They are now regarded as friends, advisers, and instructors, not as dictators, holding the keys of heaven. And resistance to clerical or religious tyranny is no longer thought to be rebellion against God.

* 'Seven of the principal citizens and jurists of the Colony, namely: Lieut. Gov. Stoughton, Maj. Saltonstall, Maj. Richards, Maj. Gedney, Mr. Wait Winthrop, Capt. Sewall, and Mr. Sergeant,' were constituted 'a court to try the accused persons [supposed witches] at Salem. The Judges first assembled June 2d, 1692. These 'eight persons' were among the condemned.

† How much better than the ministers were these civil or military officers in the Court, namely: the Captains, Majors, Colonels, Judges, &c.?

This state of things is a natural consequence of the progress of knowledge. This has taught us, that the persons composing these councils are men, *only* men; and their misdeeds and failures, in any respect, may be talked of and even judged of in charity without transgressing the Divine laws. When we examine their characters, as we do the characters of others, we find now and then one (not a *Fair-child* of Christianity, however,) who will pervert the Scriptures for the vilest purposes, and denounce vengeance and woe on others, which we have the happiness of believing to be entirely harmless to those denounced.

Having already written at much greater length than I intended when I began, and as I must of necessity notice some other matters when I answer your letter, which I shall do the first leisure time I find, I will close this.

I might notice the word 'formal' in your postscript, but have no disposition to be captious.

My mind has lately been much engaged in a difficult reference, or I should have replied more promptly.

Respectfully,
JOHN B. TURNER.

SCITUATE, Sept. 7, 1844.

To J. B. Turner, Esq.

Dear Sir: I regret the necessity of being absent from town a week or two, just in the midst of our Correspondence, but previous engagements seem to render this absence unavoidable. When I return, and you shall have sent the remainder of your reply, I will avail myself of the first opportunity in noticing your communications.

Respectfully, yours,
DANIEL WIGHT, Jr.

SCITUATE, Sept. 7, 1844.

Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr.

Dear Sir: You say, in your letter of August 23, 'you will find the false statements to which I more particularly referred, on page 58 of Mr. Deane's "History," in the following paragraph: 'In A. D. 1824, a number of persons in the First Church and Society became desirous to introduce a church covenant recognizing the doctrine of the Trinity; but not having a majority of the Church, and less than one fourth of the Parish, who were ready to favor their views at that time, they seceded and formed a new Society.' And then you say, 'I think I can show at least *two*, if not *three*, false statements in this one paragraph.' First. 'A number of persons in the First Church and Society became desirous to introduce a church covenant which recognized the doc-

trine of the Trinity.' This you say is false, because 'the covenant here referred to was adopted, word for word, by this same First Church, March 12, 1710, 11.' This will hardly answer your purpose. You know, I know, and *all* know, as well as we can from common information, that, until sometime after 'they became desirous of introducing a covenant,' they had no knowledge of the existence of any such thing. Their proceedings and views, until 'it was found on the old book,' were the same as though no covenant existed. Take your own version of the affair: 'They were dissatisfied with their loose state with respect to their covenant.' That is, they knew of no covenant and wanted one. 'Having found an old covenant.' It would not have been a thing 'found' had they known of it before, even had it been on the 'old book *two centuries*.' 'The Trinitarian covenant was regularly renewed and adopted more than two months,' &c. They would not have done this, had they not desired to adopt a 'covenant recognizing the doctrine of the Trinity.' The word *renewed* is not applicable until they knew of something *to renew*. Your version then is, 'they were desirous to adopt* a covenant recognizing the doctrine of the Trinity.' You say *adopt*,* Mr. Deane says *introduce*; another might say *establish*. Whether the words *adopt*, *introduce*, or *establish*, had been used by Mr. Deane, three quarters of the community, including myself, would have understood precisely the same thing. I cannot see difference enough to warrant trampling on the ashes of the dead, or indeed any difference at all. If Mr. Deane's statement is false, I do not see but yours must be false also. But according to my recollection of the transactions, the statement gathered from your letter as made out above is correct.

You ask, 'would not an impartial and candid reader suppose from his statement, that the Church had previously been Unitarian from time immemorial, at least, that it had not been Trinitarian?' I can see nothing of what the Church 'had been' in this paragraph; but, as they had at *that time* 'not a majority of the Church and less than one fourth of the Society,' I conclude the Parish *was* not Trinitarian. To find what Mr. Deane says of religious sentiments in the town,† which includes of course the First Parish, look on page 91 of his 'History,' where you will find the following: 'We may say, in general terms, that the doctrines preached and held were on the ground of moderate Calvinism until about 1750.' 'Since 1750, a majority of the people may have been denominated Arminian in their sentiments, and at the present time [1831], as names are now used, a considerable

* To renew their covenant.

† I was examining this paragraph only, — not a remote section.

majority may be termed Unitarian.' I will now ask you, would the candid and impartial reader suppose, from Mr. Deane's 'History,' that the Church had been Unitarian from time immemorial, at least, that it had never been Trinitarian?

Again, you ask me, 'Did not this same Trinitarian Church secede from the old Society, in 1825? If so, are we not still, not only the first *Trinitarian* Church of Christ in S. but the *First Church* in S.? I do not ask for civil law to decide such a question, but do not the facts, the Bible, and common sense so decide?' 'The facts.' No. They seceded, and formed a new Society. 'The Bible.' In what chapter and verse is it recorded that your Church is the First Church in Scituate? 'Common sense.' This is one of the foundations of the civil law, which calls a church an association of some persons belonging to some society or parish, associated for *religious purposes only*, part and parcel of the same society or parish. Does common sense say, if persons dissolve their connection with a parish, leave it, that, by so doing, *they* become said parish instead of the parish left? In this quotation from your letter is another cut at the civil law. As I went into that subject in my last letter, I will pass it here, simply proposing a question for your grave reflection. Is it your duty as a Christian minister or as a worthy citizen thus to inculcate opposition to the laws of the land in which you live? Let the Bible and common sense aid your thoughts in answering this question to your own conscience. Think of it, I entreat you, as becomes a Christian and good citizen.

Secondly. Mr. Deane says, 'but not having a majority of the church, &c. which were ready to favor their views,' &c., and you ask, 'Is not this statement false?' No. Your reasoning, that because the Trinitarian covenant was adopted and sustained 'more than two months previous to the secession,' that there was a majority of the church in its favor, is nullified by your 'Manual,' and by the received opinion at the time of the Church's troubles. My understanding of the matter at the time, and I believe the general understanding was, that the liberal part of the Church did not *attend* the church meetings. The Pastor and perhaps some few others attended a few of the first, until they became satisfied their Orthodox brethren wanted more to control the opinions of others, than peaceably enjoy their own. They then went no more, and let the Orthodox party fix things in their own way. In confirmation of this I have been lately told by a gentleman of respectability and entitled to credit, that he was present at a conversation between two leading churchmen, one of each party, when the Orthodox man, after various arguments in the case, said, 'We must have a church meeting.' 'Have it then,' replied the liberal man, 'I shall not go near you.'

Now, if you please, take your 'Manual.' On page 11, you give

the names of the majority * (as *you* call it). Total, 12. On the next page you give the names of the minority. Total, 10, 'exclusive of the Pastor.' In an errata, very slightly stuck on the last leaf, one other name is added to the minority, making 11, and the Pastor added, 12. They then stood, according to your 'Manual,' 12 and 12. What makes a majority? Besides, among the *majority*, 12, was one man who had paid no tax in the Parish, had not partaken the Sacrament with the Church, or been to meeting there but rarely, if at all, for 30 or 40 years. In fact, had entirely withdrawn himself from all participation or action, either in Church or Society. You say, 'he was a member of the Church in *regular* standing,' and count him with your majority!! It was at the time and now is, one of the strangest things in this world, how it was possible, good, pious, honest men, which I believe most of your majority were, could drum up and bring forward to vote the person alluded to. That 'he afterwards reformed,' I rejoice. But would the same men who brought him forward to vote, at that very time, have associated with him in the common intercourse of life? Would they at that time have been willing to be ranked as his intimate friends, or be classed with him as fit companions? You say, 'No course of discipline had been commenced against him.' You doubtless know, that churches holding the religious faith of Mr. Thomas's Society, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, and with which, whether satisfactory to us or not, we have nothing to do, do not expel members even if they think them unworthy. But this man had expelled himself, absolutely and entirely, for 30 or 40 years before the Separation, and morally had no business to come, or rather to be brought forward to count one in a division. I could say much more, but *with* this man, if your 'Manual' is true, they stood 12 and 12. Of course, Mr. Deane is not a liar, for saying 'not having a majority.'*

Thirdly. The secession and formation of the new Society is represented as taking place at "that time," namely, in 1824, but which did not till April, 1825.' 'This is a false statement.'

The secession took place under the law, I believe, of 1823, eight years before the amendment of the Constitution, modifying and amending the third article of the Bill of Rights. Before this amendment, they could not leave one society without joining or forming another. They, no doubt, proceeded legally. Their certificate of separation and formation is signed by the

* It will be seen, my opponent here confounds two distinct events,—taking facts exclusively from the one to prove the other. The covenant was renewed Feb 6. Rev. Mr. Thomas was dismissed, as Pastor, April 29th,—two very different transactions. Several Trinitarians, voted for the former who did not for the latter.

clerk of the new Society, officially. (They had not then, perhaps, been taught, that disobedience to the civil law was a duty.) Mr. Deane, published his book in 1831, before the amendment of the Constitution. Now what does he say? 'They seceded and formed a new Society.' This tells what they did. 'Their first meeting was held April, 15, 1825.' This tells when they did it. The language is plain and simple, and I can hardly see how it is possible for a candid man, or a man not predetermined to find 'false statements' to understand it as you seem to do.

You say, 'there is prejudice connected with this subject.' I most sincerely believe it. 'There is interest,' some thought so when the 'eleven persons' joined the Church. I then thought that judgment uncharitable. I still believe the 'eleven' joined with good motives, whatever the motives of their advisers might have been. But from this pertinacious adherence to the name *First Church*, and denying the civil law, &c., I have been led to doubt whether, if a certain Rev. Mr. Partridge had been as well acquainted with the law as laid down in the Dedham case, as he was with the Scriptures,* he would not have been so zealous in convincing 'the eleven' that they *must* join the Church.

Several other things in your letter I should like to notice, but, having already gotten to a great length, I forbear.

Perhaps it is needless now for me to say, that, in my opinion, you have entirely failed to maintain your charges against Mr. Deane. Can *you* think, that in an action of slander, and you attempting to prove the truth in justification, that your facts and reasoning would convince a jury that Mr. Deane was a liar? It appears to me you cannot. The charge, you say, you made 'deliberately,' not, then, hastily or carelessly. I shall and must expect that you will retract this deliberate charge of falsehood against Mr. Deane, and make the retraction as public as you make the charge.

As this is probably the last letter I shall write you, I take the opportunity to assure you that I entertain no personal disrespect to you, and can most sincerely join you in wishing 'the welfare both temporal and spiritual' of the religious Society, with which you are connected; and, so far as I know myself, have indulged in no severity of expression or remark, more than I should have done in a similar case, with any one of my own particular religious views.

Respectfully, &c.

JOHN B. TURNER.

* No very great fault. It was the neighboring pastors, however, and not Mr. Partridge, who were more particularly consulted for advice.

SCITUATE, September 13, 1844.

Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr.

Dear Sir: It happened (as it very seldom does) that I did not send to the post-office on Saturday, and did not get your note until the next day. I had before this written and sealed the enclosed. You will perceive by it that I thought our Correspondence was finished, but I shall be happy to receive any communication you may be pleased to make. I propose to spend a part of next week at Boston, and the week after I expect to commence on business, which will keep me from home the most of the time for four weeks, at least, and perhaps more, and writing connected with said business will probably take my leisure time for some time longer. I mention this as a reason for asking your patience to wait a reply, if any is wanting.

I passed some things abruptly in the enclosed, and some without notice, through want of space. Permit me to avail myself of this opportunity to continue the subject.

You say 'there is prejudice and there is interest connected with this subject.' That prejudices did exist at the time of separation, I have no doubt. Religious difficulties are seldom without. But these with the actors at that time, had passed, and were passing rapidly away. Feelings of kindness and mutual interchange of good offices, had begun to prevail, when your 'Manual' appeared, calling up the whole matter anew for discussion and altercation. Reviving remembrances, which mutual love and charity might wish forgotten. And for what purpose? Should you be able to sustain every position you there assume, what benefit can it possibly be to you or your Society? I am unable to see the least, either spiritual or temporal. If any, I wish you would point them out.* You may say you establish the truth. Even if you do, if it is no benefit to any one, what is gained? Is the mere name of *First Church* of sufficient importance to you to justify these things?

Again. The manner of writing in said 'Manual,' impeaching the veracity of a man whose memory a great majority of the town hold in high respect, denouncing those who do not think with you, as regarding the laws of man more than the laws of God, &c. This denouncement includes, I believe, the greater part of persons acquainted with the circumstances, many of whom think your claim of *First Church* preposterous, and some even ridiculous. Has this a tendency to do away prejudice? Would not a course the opposite to this have better accorded with Christian principles?

'There is interest.' From what follows about 'wrongs,' &c.,

* See the testimony of the members of the Ecclesiastical Council in 1825, relative to this subject, on pages 5 and 6.

I might be led to think that this was an important consideration with you. With me, I can assure you it has not the least weight. Suppose that a church was a body distinct from a parish, and had civil rights like a parish; and suppose your Church, instead of a claim derived, I know not where, and supported, I hardly know how, had a legal and undisputed right to the name *First Church*, would this give them any kind of claim or right to the property of the *First Parish*? I cannot see that it would, any more than it would give you a right to the property of your neighbor Peakes, or Briggs. If this matter of 'interest' is your main object, in so strenuously persisting in this claim of *First Church*, I regret you had not first examined the subject. This needs no lawyer, plain common sense is sufficient. Had you done this, you might not have read the 'History of Scituate' with eyes so different from others, and might have left old prejudices to wear out.

'They may succeed and prosper for a time; but, Sir, alas, for their end! But I will not add.' What is meant by this I do not exactly know. But whether meant for me, or the religious Society to which I belong, I have nothing to reply. I can truly join in the poet's prayer,

'Let not *my* weak, unknowing hand,
Presume *thy* bolts to throw,
And deal destruction o'er the land,
On each I judge thy foe.'

Respectfully,
JOHN B. TURNER.

SCITUATE, September 30, 1844.

To J. B. Turner, Esq.

Dear Sir: Having returned from my previous engagements, and having received the remainder of your communications to my last, I hasten a reply. I was not a little surprised, that you should expect the Correspondence 'finished,' after having sent me such an amount of material, apposite and inapposite, leaving the whole subject in a very unfinished state. As you commenced the Correspondence, propriety requires that I should close it, which I intend to do in the present communication.

Passing over several personal allusions, as unworthy of notice, and believing that your aim and disposition 'to cut to the right and left amongst the characters of those who differ in opinion from' you, 'whether living or dead,' especially if ministers, will be clearly read by those who may peruse your own communications, I come at once to the subject.

The first thing you notice in our 'Manual,' 'among several which seem strange' to you, relates to the dismissal of Rev. Mr. Thomas. 'Dismissed,' you inquire? 'By whom? Not by

his Church,' &c. I am glad to find in your letter this acknowledgment; 'the cord between church and state having been severed years ago.' But had you not mentioned this fact, I could have quoted the following more definite passage from the Revised Statutes of Massachusetts. 'The respective churches, connected and associated in public worship with such parishes and religious societies, shall continue to have, exercise, and enjoy all their accustomed privileges and liberties, respecting divine worship, church order and discipline, and shall be encouraged in the peaceable and regular enjoyment and practice thereof.* In perfect harmony with this, are sections second and fourth † of our 'Church Discipline,' (see 'Church Manual,' p. 19,) with the notes subjoined from 'The Cambridge Platform,' showing that the church and state do not interfere in these respects. The church claims independence of the civil law, and the state acknowledges the claim. So far, then, as we are agreed, let us walk by the same rule. Now it is evident from the above, to a demonstration, that the secession of certain persons from a *society*, does not in the least affect their *church* standing. This is in accordance, I believe, with almost universal practice in evangelical churches. The removal of a church member from one society to another, leaves his church standing untouched, till regularly dismissed by the church and received by letter to another. (See 'Church Manual,' page 18, rule 7.) Circumstances may allow a person to remain for years connected with a church many miles distant from his place of residence. Probably, nearly a third of the members of some of our churches, (where the salary is raised by subscription,) are not technically connected with the Society, as such.

But that a person's church standing is not necessarily affected by removing from a Society, is further evident, from the fact that *the whole* Church may remove in mass, and leave the Society without any Church. If a Church and Society are two things, capable of being 'severed,' as you say they were 'years ago,' this point cannot be controverted. Now, if such a church had a regular pastor before the secession, they would, doubtless, have the same power to dismiss him, as such, after the secession as before. They could not, indeed, dismiss him as the minister of

* Part I., Title 8, chap. 20, sec. 3.

† '2. Such a company of saints possess all the power which the Lord Jesus Christ has given to his Church on earth; and are authorized and warranted by him, independently of any other body, whether civil or religious, to maintain and exercise in his name, the government and discipline which he has established and enjoined by his supreme authority, in the Holy Scriptures, for the preservation of the peace, order, purity, and happiness of his churches.

'4. It is the duty and the privilege of a Church, to choose and appoint its

the Parish, but only as the Pastor of the church.* Such was the nature of Rev. Mr. Thomas's dismissal, except that it was done, not with the entire concurrence of the Church, but by the majority. The Church considered that Mr. Thomas had forfeited his office, as a worthy Pastor, by obstinately refusing, and persevering in refusing to comply with the regular votes and directions of his Church, such as notifying Church-meetings, when requested to by the signature of a majority of the male members, refusing to attend said meetings, and to record their regular votes and proceedings, when requested.† That the majority constitutes the only legitimate power of deciding all proper questions, brought before a church, will not be denied, I presume, by any Congregationalist or Republican. Says Bancroft, our elegant historian, in speaking of Puritanism, 'The church existed independent of its pastor, who owed his office to its free choice; the will of the majority was its law.'‡ This principle of Puritanism still remains in all our Congregational churches. It will be seen from the above considerations, that the 'certificate,' of which you speak, certifying that those who seceded 'were not members of the *First Parish*,' does not in the least interfere with their connection with the *First Church*. How absurd, then, is your assertion, that, 'according to the same laws,' they 'had no further action or control in—the Church!' How absurd, also, your inference, that 'they might therefore, with as much propriety, have dismissed Mr. Flint, of Cohasset, or any other minister in the Commonwealth!' §

own officers, who are bound, when they are regularly inducted into their offices, to act as the servants of the church, for the promotion of its spiritual interests, in the duties of their appointment.' *Notes*. 'And if the church have power to choose their officers, then, in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power, also, to depose them; for to open and shut, to choose and refuse, to constitute in office and to remove from office, are acts belonging to the same power.' 'The choice of church officers belongeth not to the civil magistrate, as such, or diocesan bishops or patrons; for of these, or any such like, the Scripture is wholly silent, as having any power therein.'—*Camb. Plat.* chap. 8, secs. 7 and 9. — (See 'Manual'.)

It should be remembered, that 'the Synod, who framed the "Cambridge Platform," was assembled by order of the General Court,—that the members were supported, while in session, at the public charge,—that the "Platform," when framed, was presented to the General Court for their consideration and acceptance, and that the same "was most thankfully accepted and approved,"' Oct. 1648. 'In 1680, the "Platform" was again approved by the General Court, and "ordered to be printed, for the benefit of the churches in present and after times."' §

* The reader will please *note* this remark, and the one following.

† The Records, the Council, and survivors furnish this information. Five votes of grievance are recorded as passed at one church meeting, April 9th, 1825.

‡ Vol. I. p. 461.

§ My correspondent inquires, 'Does common sense say, if persons dis-

The Ecclesiastical Council convened for the purpose, gave in part, as the result of their deliberations, what has already been published in our 'Manual,' (pages 9 and 10.) They also include in their result, 'Fifthly. If there shall not be a majority of the male members of the said church, who shall at a regular meeting vote, as specified in the last article,' &c. Here follow further directions how to proceed in procuring a dismission and joining other churches, or organizing a new one.* In the conclusion of the result, the Council say, 'They have endeavored to seek the divine guidance, and to regulate themselves by the rules of the gospel, and a regard to the glory of God, and that it is their sincere desire and prayer to the Author of all grace, that in their future proceedings the said First Church in Scituate may look to the great Head of the Church for direction, and may be led to such results, as shall conduce to the advancement of truth and righteousness and the salvation of souls.' It is thus seen, that if the majority of male members were in favor of the previous course, they were to proceed, 'as the First Church;' but if not a majority, to get dismissed and organize anew, or join other churches in the vicinity. But the majority were in favor of the previous course, and their action has been since approved by the neighboring churches.†

But the question, as to the title of First Church, in this case,

solve their connection with a *parish* — leave it, that by so doing *they* become said parish, instead of the parish left?' To make the cases parallel, 'Suppose a parish, in regular meeting, votes by a large majority to remove from one place of worship to another. Can it not in this way remove? Or will the minority — it may be a mere handful — who choose to remain in the former place of worship, be regarded as the original parish? And so of all voluntary societies.' 'When a church in regular meeting takes up the subject of withdrawing from a parish; deliberates respecting it, solemnly votes to withdraw, and accordingly does withdraw (although it may leave individuals behind), we insist upon it that the church is withdrawn; and we challenge any person acquainted with our history to bring any respectable usage of the country, previous to the late decisions, to countervail the sentiment we have expressed.' But these 'decisions in question — have not been generally acquiesced in, and *will not be*. They were not, in the case of the Church in Dedham. By a great majority of the religious people of this Commonwealth; who know any thing of the circumstances — indeed, we may say all, unless it be the few, whose particular views were met and gratified — *the Church* which separated from the First Parish, ever has been, and is, and will be, considered and denominated *the first and original Church* in Dedham, the determination of the court, notwithstanding, and so will the First Church in Scituate. Much as the good people of this Commonwealth are disposed to respect the decisions of their judges, they have too much respect for their own common sense to believe, when a Church votes, by a large majority to withdraw from a Parish, and by a large majority does withdraw, that still it *leaves itself behind!*'

* This shows clearly how the Council regarded the church standing of these members.

† See Appendix, Note A. p. 51.

may be decided on even higher authority, than that of being the majority. The First Church, gathered 1634, was a Trinitarian and Calvinistic Church. None will dispute this. It was Trinitarian and Calvinistic also, in 1710-'11, when our present covenant was originally adopted, and again in 1825, when that same covenant was renewed, word for word, by a fair majority, as will be shown in its place. This same Church has stood on the same ancient foundation from that time to the present. We are, therefore, *ecclesiastically*, the only legitimate First Church in Scituate. The propriety of this conclusion from the above premises, will be further evident from the following testimony and considerations.

Rev. Dr. Priestley, a distinguished Unitarian writer, says, 'I do not wonder that you Calvinists entertain and express a strongly unfavorable opinion of us, Unitarians. The truth is, there neither can nor ought to be any compromise between us. If you are right, we are not Christians at all; and if we are right, you are gross idolators.' Rev. Mr. Belsham, another Unitarian writer, says, 'Opinions such as these can no more harmonize with each other than light and darkness, than Christ and Belial. They who hold doctrines so diametrically opposite cannot be fellow-worshippers in the same temple.' These writers are your own advocates, and to their opinions, as above quoted, we assent. Every intelligent Orthodox man, whether Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, German or Dutch Reformed, as well as my own denomination,* believe that the *reception or rejection of such doctrines, as native and total depravity, instantaneous regeneration by the Holy Ghost, the vicarious sufferings and death of Christ, as the only atonement for sin, the Supreme Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the doctrine of the Trinity, and the absolute eternity of future punishment, constitute a contrast in Christian doctrine and church standing, as great as the above writers imply. That Unitarians reject all these doctrines, with, perhaps, the exception of the last mentioned, I can show from their own authorized publications, as well as from the lips of your own religious 'instructor,' before competent witnesses.†*

* The above denominations probably include more than nineteen twentieths of all the members of Protestant churches in the United States.

† 'This may certify, that we, the undersigned, being present at the house of Capt. Henry Damon July 28, 1843, and hearing the conversation between Rev. Edmond Q. Sewall and Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr., on the doctrines above mentioned, can testify that we heard the Rev. E. Q. Sewall distinctly avow his disbelief in all those doctrines except the last, which relates to future punishment, and which he did not believe or disbelieve, being as he thought *not revealed*.'

(Signed,)

Scituate, December, 1844.†

HENRY DAMON, 2d,
ORANGE LITCHFIELD.

‡ See also Appendix, Note B. p. 52.

The last doctrine above mentioned is rejected by many Unitarian writers, if not generally, and, as you probably know, is, at least, not believed by your own 'instructor.' Now, if the original Church, gathered in Scituate, 1634, was Trinitarian, and embraced all the above-named doctrines, as can be clearly shown; if that same Church adopted our present covenant in 1710-'11, and renewed it in 1825, and if that same Church — the majority, or even a minority only, had still abode by the original Faith and Covenant, must not that body be regarded as the regular successors and legitimate First Church, ecclesiastically? But doubly so, when we remember that the majority of the Church renewed the old covenant in 1825, and still abide substantially in the faith of the same great and fundamental doctrines.* We can thus clearly trace our regular history as a Trinitarian Church, from the present back to 1634. But I would inquire, how far back you can trace your history as a Unitarian Church, which is something 'so diametrically opposite' to ours?† Dear Sir, I must close this part of my reply by saying, that your view of Mr. Thomas's dismissal, with your own acknowledgments, appears exceedingly 'strange' to me.

I proceed to your next subject of remark, relative to civil, ecclesiastical, and moral law. 'Here,' you say, 'are things asserted and implied, to which' you 'cannot agree,' namely, 'That the civil law is in opposition to the law of God, and that the ecclesiastical laws are the laws of God. To this' you 'cannot assent.' Why not? This language, as well as my own, only implies that there are some portions of the civil law in opposition to the law of God, and likewise some portions of ecclesiastical law, agreeable to his will. Can this be doubted? Or are the civil laws all so perfect, and the ecclesiastical so corrupt, that you cannot assent to so broad a statement as this? But from what follows, I perceive you assume the ground that civil law is every thing — the highest and only practical authority, and that the ecclesiastical is nothing — may be trampled under foot as 'unauthorized,' and 'not entitled to the least consideration.' Were you the only person for whom I may be writing, I might at once lay down my pen; as of what use is it to argue with one who denies the very first principles relative to the subject in hand. In your mind, the word 'Church' seems to have

* By comparing in opposite columns our present Confession of Faith, with the 'Confession, owned and consented to, by the elders and messengers of the Churches assembled at Boston, in New England, May 12, 1650,' I find every essential idea in our articles, not only implied, but fully expressed in theirs. This Confession is very particular and full, covering more than twenty octavo pages.

† It is perfectly evident, that it cannot be traced back any farther than April 29, 1825. But its origin and foundation, I leave others to trace.

no corresponding idea. It is talked of, indeed, but often so mingled up with Society, or Parish, as to lose all separate existence and become a perfect nonentity. The only apology I can find (it is no excuse) for such sentiments and confusion, is in the fact, that you are not, as I understand, a member of any church, and I am sorry to add, seem to be one of those described in 1 Cor. 2: 14. But as the main points at issue are introduced in your letters, I will endeavor to give them a fair examination.

To an intelligent mind, all you bring forward to illustrate your position in regard to civil and ecclesiastical law, especially the case of Massasoit's grandson,* the Salem witchcraft, and laws enacted (if you suppose 'the Blue laws' were ever 'gravely enacted') against making mince pies and kissing babies on certain days, has not the least connection with the subject. We all know, and ought more frequently to remember, that the will of God, as interpreted both by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, is too often misunderstood. But this fact ought not to lead us to the rash conclusion, that we can know nothing about either State or Church, or that the civil authority only is infallible, while the ecclesiastical is unworthy of the 'least consideration.' Did your course of remark, however, (I will not call it reasoning,) bear at all on the subject, tending to weaken our confidence in ecclesiastical laws, it must have a similar influence against all civil laws; for we learn from your own pen, that it was the civil, not the ecclesiastical authorities, which hung all the witches, and inflicted all the penalties, of which you speak. Or do you say ministers then had great power in state as well as church, perhaps it might be questioned, whether they have not still some influence there, and whether it may not have been even principally through that influence our civil laws have been improved in some of the most desirable respects, while a far different class of men may have caused them in other respects to degenerate. I might mention some of these, did time or the merits of the question at issue demand.

But although your illustrations do not bear in the least on the question, I must not suffer some of your statements to pass without saying a word to counteract the natural impression they would make, should they meet the public eye, as I am confident that impression would be *false*, if that be not the fact in regard to some of the statements themselves. Your intimacy in spirit, as well as friendship, with Rev. Mr. Deane, seems, alas! too apparent. You employ great sophistry, if nothing worse, especially in the case of Massasoit's grandson. History informs us, that this lad was not only the grandson of Massasoit, 'the Indian prince, who received the Pilgrims with open arms' — was

* Or rather *great-grandson*.

always their friend in need,' &c., but that he was also the son of king Philip, that Indian warrior, who excited the New England tribes, and those as far south, it was supposed, as Virginia, to unite in cutting off, if possible, the whole English colony, then in its infancy. You doubtless recollect 'his first attack upon the English at Swansey, as they were returning from public worship'—how also he 'marked his route with the burning of houses and the scalping of the defenceless inhabitants'—the fate of those 'seventy or eighty young men, the flower of Essex county' at Bloody Brook—how 'peculiarly disastrous to Scituate,' also* and the numerous other towns laid in ashes, beside the brave captains and others, who fell in those melancholy times, some by the most frightful tortures. Says the historian, 'Twelve or thirteen towns were destroyed; the disbursements and losses equalled in value half a million of dollars—an enormous sum for the few of that day. More than six hundred men, chiefly young men, the flower of the country, of whom the mother might have been proud, perished in the field. As many as six hundred houses were burned—there was scarcely a family from which death had not selected his victim.'† 'Every eleventh family was houseless, and every eleventh soldier had sunk to his grave.‡ It was during this struggle of the English, as it were for existence, that Philip's son, with some one hundred and thirty or more Indian warriors 'fell' prisoners 'into the hands of our ancestors.' It was under these circumstances that the 'innocent boy,' of whom you speak, was captured, and it was truly a question, whether these prisoners should be released or executed, while those at liberty continued to burn and kill, and it were still doubtful what would be the result. Says Hutchinson,§ 'The cruelties which had been exercised upon the English were urged in excuse for the treatment which the Indians received, who were made prisoners, or surrendered themselves.' 'A great many, therefore, of the chiefs were executed in Boston and Plymouth, and most of the rest were sold and shipped off for slaves to Bermudas and other parts.' But did the ministers do all this? Did they even advise to send any, or especially this lad, into 'hopeless slavery?' I do not find it so recorded. They were, indeed, called upon to express their opinion, and, such as it was, I will state in their own language. To this inquiry, 'The Rev. Mr. Cotton, of Plymouth, and the Rev. Mr. Arnold, of Marshfield, gave the following answer:'

'The question being proposed to us by our honored rulers, whether Philip's son be a child of death, our answer hereunto

* See Deane's 'History,' p. 120–128.

† See Bancroft, vol. ii. p. 109.

‡ See Goodrich.

§ Hist. of Mass., vol. i. p. 307.

is, that we do acknowledge that rule, Deut. 24: 16, to be moral, and therefore perpetually binding; namely, that in a particular act of wickedness, though capital, the crime of the parent doth not render his child a subject of punishment by the civil magistrate; yet, upon serious consideration, we humbly conceive that the children of notorious traitors, rebels, and murderers, especially of such as have been principal leaders and actors in such horrid villanies, and that against a whole nation, yea, the whole Israel of God, may be involved in the guilt of their parents, and may *salva republica* [that is, for the public safety,] be adjudged to death, as to us seems evident by the Scripture instances of Saul, Achan, Haman, the children of whom were cut off by the sword of justice, for the transgression of their parents, although concerning some of those children, it be manifest that they were not capable of being actors therein.

(Signed)

SAMUEL ARNOLD,
JOHN COTTON.*

Here is nothing said about sending into slavery, or indeed whether Philip's son should be executed at all. They laid down a general principle, as they understood it, and then left the civil authorities to apply it if approved, wherever they thought proper. They did not, however, follow 'their decision,' even if they supposed Philip's son one of those 'involved in the guilt of their parents;' for 'their decision' was, that such may be adjudged to death, not 'sold to hopeless slavery.'

The 'Rev. Mr. Keith, of Bridgewater, gave a more benignant interpretation.' He says, after referring to several texts of Scripture, for his more lenient reply in respect to this boy; 'I hope God will direct those whom it doth concern to a good issue. Let us join our prayers at the throne of grace, with all our might, that the Lord would so dispose of all public motions and affairs, that his Jerusalem in this wilderness, may be the habitation of justice, and the mountain of holiness.'† I can find no authority more to your purpose, than the above, and surely such serious, candid, and respectful replies do not look so much like the cruel 'domineering spirit,' as like the true Christian. 'The progress in knowledge,' of which you so often speak, as well as the Christian spirit exhibited, I fear is not quite so flattering as you seem to suppose. They had some kind and Christian feeling, and probably a little knowledge, even in those early times, as will appear in the sequel.

I might here refer to the early efforts of our ancestors to enlighten and Christianize the Indians, showing a very different

* See Appendix to Morton's 'New England Memorial,' Judge Davis's edition, pp. 453, 454.

† Id. p. 455.

spirit cherished by many, especially of the clergy, from that which you seem to prefer to charge upon them, but will desist with the following brief quotations from Governor Everett on this point. He says, 'Our fathers regarded the aboriginal inhabitants as heathen. They bestowed unwearied pains to Christianize them, and with much greater success than is generally supposed.*' 'Since the death of the apostle Paul, a nobler, truer, and warmer spirit, than John Eliot, never lived.† I need not add more, to set the case of Massasoit's grandson, and the spirit of Christian ministers of that day, in the true and proper light, or to wield your own weapon against yourself.

It will be equally easy to overturn your witchcraft illustration. I admit the delusion, but it was the fault of the age rather than of particular men,‡ like the delusions of our own times, in regard to ardent spirit, American slavery, Millerism, and war, all which we hope are soon to pass away. It might also be questioned, whether there is not as much in reason and Scripture to support the theory of witchcraft,§ as that of Mesmerism, (familiarily called Animal Magnetism,) at least, in some of its forms. Still we know, that after all this 'progress in knowledge,' in these 'enlightened times,' and even in 'our University,' has this latter (shall I not call it delusion?) been admitted her halls for exhibition. And may it not be possible for some future historian to make out quite as true and affecting a story of more recent events, touching intemperance, slavery, or war, in which warm, if not 'cold-blooded murders' occur by thousands instead of tens,|| as you have done in the case of Massasoit's grandson, or the Salem witchcraft?

Laws had existed in England, making witchcraft a capital crime before the influence of the Puritans arose,¶ and executions had occurred in various parts of the mother country, by the decisions (among others) of Sir Matthew Hale, one of the brightest ornaments of the English bench.** Says Bancroft, 'in the years in which Scotland sacrificed hecatombs to the delusion

* Orations, p. 591.

† Id. p. 614.

‡ 'In New England, at the time of Cotton Mather, the belief in witchcraft may be said to have been universal.'—*Prof. Pond*.

§ See Ex. 22: 18. Deut. 18: 10, 11. 1 Sam. 28: 7-20.

|| My correspondent says, 'some forty or fifty.'

¶ See, also, note second, on page 14. 'The Puritans first made their appearance during the reign of Queen Mary,' 1553 to 1558.—*Worcester*.

** 'At those trials, Sir Thomas Brown attended as a witness, who "declared his opinion in favor of the reality of witchcraft, and entered into a particular discussion of the subject before the jury."' In the 17th century, "more than two hundred were hanged in England, thousands were burned in Scotland, and large numbers perished in various parts of Europe," for the supposed crime of witchcraft.'—*Prof. Pond*.

[witchcraft], there were *three* victims in New England,' and it would seem only three.* Like numerous other laws from the English code, that respecting witchcraft was enrolled on the statute-book here. If ministers, as well as physicians, justices, legislators, and judges,† approved this law for a time, *they* were evidently sincere in it, as the Rev. George Burroughs, minister of Salem, and a considerable number of professors of religion were executed among others, though I know not as any judge or justice suffered in a similar manner. Ministers, I believe, rejoiced equally, at least, with others in the removal of the evil. But evidently, men who could converse with supposed witches in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Indian languages,‡ and lay the foundation of such a republic and institutions, as we find the Puritans did lay, were no fools or knaves.

Says a late governor of Connecticut, in a recent letter to Prof. Pond, respecting his little book, entitled the 'Mather Family,' 'The dispassionate, luminous, and effectual manner in which you have refuted the malignant aspersions attempted to be cast on the fair name of Increase and Cotton Mather, richly merit the applause of all virtuous and honorable men.'|| Our Pilgrim fathers had their foibles and errors, no doubt, as most others, but we shall have to go far and search long for such another band of men as first settled these New England shores, whether we regard their learning, talent, resolution, or ardent piety. You know their civil compact before they left the 'Mayflower' — you know the system of common schools they devised and adopted — you know also by whom and for what purposes chiefly, our more than one hundred colleges have been established, and who still generally preside over them. Nor will you probably call in question the following testimony of Unitarian writers.§

Says Bancroft, 'The Puritans established a government in America, such as the laws of natural justice warranted.' 'Calvinism overthrew priestcraft: saw in goodness, infinite joy; in evil, infinite woe; and recognizing no other abiding distinctions, opposed, secretly, but surely, hereditary monarchy, aristocracy, and bondage. Puritanism exalted the *laity* — was religion struggling for the people. The effects of Puritanism display its true character still more distinctly. Ecclesiastical tyranny is of all kinds the worst; its fruits are cowardice, idleness, ignorance, and poverty: Puritanism was a life-giving spirit; activity, thrift, intelligence followed in its train; and as for courage, a coward

* Vol. i. p. 465.

† 'Particularly Chief Justice Stoughton.'—*Prof. Pond*.

‡ As Cotton Mather did. (*Magnalia*, vol. ii. p. 402.)

|| See 'Boston Recorder,' Oct. 3, 1844.

§ Chiefly Unitarian.

and a Puritan never went together. The Puritans of New England are parents of one third the whole white population of the United States.*

Says Rev. Alexander Young, 'It has been the practice of the Independent or Congregational clergy, both in Old and New England, from the earliest times, to take an interest and part in public affairs. The prominent and efficient agency, which they exercised in the infancy of our colonial settlements is well known: Cotton, Hooker, and Davenport, shared at least an equal power with Winthrop, Haynes, and Eaton, in moulding the civil polity of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The services of Increase Mather in obtaining the second Charter of Massachusetts are recorded in her history; and the patriotic exertions of Mayhew, Chauncy, and Cooper, before and during the revolutionary war, will never be forgotten. The Congregational clergy were found, at that time, almost to a man, on the side of their country's independence; and they have ever been the earnest and consistent advocates of liberty with order.†

Says Worcester, in his 'Elements of History,' 'Hume acknowledges the services of the Puritans, "by whom alone," according to him, "the precious spark of *liberty* had been kindled and was preserved; and to whom the English owe the whole freedom of their Constitution."‡ 'They were strenuous advocates for freedom in the State, and a more thorough reform in religion.‡

Says President Dwight, of Yale College, 'Plymouth was the first town built in New England by civilized men; and those by whom it was built were inferior in worth to no body of men, whose names are recorded in history, during the last seventeen hundred years.§ The poet also thus eulogizes these men:

'These are the iron men, that broke
Ground, where the Indian's war-fire curled;
These spurned the princely, priestly yoke,
These are the fathers of the world.' — TAPPAN.

The above quotations show how applicable your charge of 'king-craft and priest-craft' is upon the New England clergy. If you had known the first principles of Congregationalism, you would have known that this system, as derived from the New Testament, knows no priest, except the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. That the clergy, in general, have not much departed from their former high standing, may be seen, in part, from the testimony of as great a mind, probably, as this

* See vol. i. pp. 460, 461, 462, 463, 467; vol. ii. 461.

† 'Chronicles of Pilgrims,' p. 37.

‡ See pp. 199, and 205, 206; also 241.

§ Quoted in Young's 'Chronicles of Pilgrims,' p. 161.

land ever produced. Please read the fourteenth and fifteenth pages of Daniel Webster's speech on Girard's will, delivered last February, for this proof.*

But I pass to another point in the discussion, — the morality of the question. This I regard as a very important point. But you say, 'I considered your claims of being the First Church, of little consequence.' Again, 'I say nothing of the moral law, for I can see no possible way it can have any bearing on the number of your Church.' Still further, 'No legislature in Massachusetts would dare enact laws to clash with the Divine laws.' And, again, 'I cannot believe the people of Massachusetts would permit a law, manifestly contrary to the laws of God, to stand on their statute-books an instant.' But you believe such laws have stood there, as in the case of witchcraft and kissing babies, &c.; and is it not possible the statute-book may not yet be quite purged? This may appear more evident as we proceed.

You seem, Dear Sir, most carefully to avoid any allusion (except in one brief hint, near your close,) to the fact, that our Trinitarian ancestors left property to the amount of some thousands of dollars, to this First Church, and the Society connected with it, for the support of their religion, which, we have seen, is something 'so diametrically opposite' to Unitarianism. This fund was left principally, if not entirely, near a century before Calvinism lost the ascendancy in the town, (it is doubtful whether it ever fairly lost that ascendancy in the Church, as will be seen more fully hereafter,) which you say, approvingly, Rev. Mr. Deane fixes at 'about 1750.'† Now this fund, '*you know, I know, and all know, as well as we can from common information*' and common sense, has been *grossly perverted*. And is there no morality, or rather *immorality* in this? As I have been repeatedly informed, (and the sentiment is *true*, whether ever spoken or not,) one of your own Society, a Universalist, once rose in Parish meeting, and spoke something as follows, in respect to this fund: —

'Gentlemen, you all know *this fund justly belongs to the Orthodox*, but, by uniting our strength, we outvoted them (virtually) in the Parish, and took it from them; and now the Universalist party have the same right to take this fund, by the same means, if in our power, from the Unitarian party, as we all had formerly in taking it from the Orthodox.' The whole community may see the propriety and force of this short speech, and you well know the long struggle, that has been carried on for years, between the two parties in your own Society, till endurance was no longer supportable, when many of the oppressed party, last spring, leaped from your embrace.

But to return. I say you carefully avoid all allusion to this fund, with as much skill, and, if I may judge from the com-

* See Appendix, Note C. p. 56. † See Appendix, Note D. p. 57.

motion developed in some minds, your community would make a similar ado under the agitation of this question, as our more southern brethren, — the slaveholders, — do, when the morality of the slavery question is discussed. They plead the civil, and often the divine law in support of their claims to the slave. But it is doubted whether you will openly dare go as far in support of your claims to our funds. I know the civil law, and especially as interpreted by Unitarian judges,* decides in your favor, — a decision, however, I doubt not, destined to pass into the same kind of a memorial, as the Salem witchcraft, which you say ‘will always be a stain on the fair name of Massachusetts.’ I think, Sir, you, and your more intelligent associates, will not presume to advocate before this ‘enlightened age,’ the direct morality of such self-evident perversion of funds, — such legalized unrighteousness. It was prudent, therefore, in you, to keep as clear of the moral law as possible. Sir, it has been a matter of rejoicing to our Orthodox churches, that the ‘cord between church and state’ *was* ‘severed years ago,’ and it is their only regret, that it was not ‘severed’ a few years sooner. It would have saved in their possession some hundreds of thousands, now appropriated to the most destructive influence.† And if the time has come, when the counsels of divines and ‘their misdeeds and failures, in any respect, may be talked of, and even judged of, in charity, without transgressing the divine laws,’ has it not also come, when we may talk and judge, in a similar manner, of the civil law, and of justices and judges even, with their ‘misdeeds and failures?’ Those ancestors who left our funds for the support of their religion, had, doubtless, as little sympathy with the peculiar doctrines of Unitarians, as the present Trinitarian Church in Scituate, and would probably have left a fund for their support about as soon.‡ Now is there no morality, or rather immorality in

* It is apprehended, that the statute itself may be correct, and that the ‘mistake’ has been only, or chiefly, in the judicial decisions. ‘The courts’ [in England] ‘decided some years since, that, according to law, the Unitarians had no valid claim to them,’ [namely, the *funds* left by the ‘Orthodox Dissenters.’]

† ‘A large amount of parsonage lands and other ministerial funds, in this State, is now evidently in a *perverted* condition. What was religiously set apart in the beginning by Orthodox Congregational Churches and Parishes, for the support of the Gospel ministry, as they understood it and still understand it, is now sacrilegiously applied to the maintenance of Unitarian and Universalist preachers. Some *twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars* of Orthodox funds have been thus held in a state of legalized perversion, for the last ten years, in the single town of Haverhill.’—*N. E. Puritan*, Jan. 31, 1845.

‡ The following extracts, from an English Unitarian writer, in their ‘Monthly Repository,’ will, of course, give an impartial glance at the condition of Unitarianism, in England, a few years since. This writer says: ‘Many of the old chapels amongst us, are in a pitiable state. Of our own knowledge, we can speak of some scores, that scarcely show signs of life.

snatching the children's bread, left by their fathers, and giving it to strangers? Giving it,—no, not the bread,—if it were, we would scarce open our lips, though we begged, as we have, indeed, virtually, from door to door;* but that bread is changed, as we believe, to another substance,—another gospel, wholly incapable of saving a single soul, through its direct instrumentality. How can true 'righteousness' be 'the central principle' in such a system?†

But we are not alone,—numerous other churches in this commonwealth are similarly situated. I will cite a few instances, to show the defect in our civil law.‡ Take the town of Reading, where a similar secession took place, in the spring of 1834. They had built a new and convenient house of worship, with vestry, belfry, &c., in 1829, at an expense of about four thousand dollars. The church numbered from sixty to seventy members. The separation took place when all the voters in town belonged to the first parish, unless they had joined some other. When the question was tried, it was decided by those who seldom if ever worshipped in this house, to turn this church out of doors. About one half the voters on the occasion were strangers, called in for this virtuous object. The church and some others retired, when it appeared, that those compelled in conscience to leave their new house, owned about one half of all the pews, while those who remained to enjoy it, owned only three or four, the remainder being unsold. Now the civil law authorized all this, § yea, and more. The church must give up their plate and Records! But to whom? Committees were appointed on both sides, one to give up, and the other to receive the treasure. They met for the

The number of hearers in them will not average more than thirty,—the salary of the minister, not more than £70 per annum.' 'One half of the insignificant stipends paid to ministers, proceeds from the charity of preceding ages,' [that is, 'from the endowments of the old Orthodox Presbyterians, of which the Unitarians have obtained possession.'] *Monthly Rep.* Nov. 1829. 'The whole number of Unitarian chapels, on the Island [about A. D. 1830] is as follows: In England, 206; Wales, 14; Scotland, 3,—total, 223. Of these 223 places of worship, 178—four fifths of the whole—were originally Orthodox. Of the 206, in England, only 36 were built by Unitarians.' (*Sp. of Pil.* vol. 4, p. 37.) 'No less than £120 are annually appropriated from' [the Orthodox] 'Lady Hewley's funds, to the education of young men, for the very purpose of denying and endeavoring to extinguish a belief in those doctrines, in the faith of which Lady Hewley died, and to the dissemination of which she designed her property should be devoted when she was no more.' (*Quotation from an English writer, in 'Spirit of the Pilgrims,'* vol. 4, pp. 41, 42.)

* This Society receives aid, annually, from the Mass. H. M. Society.

† A tract, recently put into my hands, is entitled, 'Righteousness the Central Principle of Christianity, and the true Basis of the Unitarian Denomination!'

‡ As now interpreted.

§ As interpreted by Unitarian judges.

purpose. The *ecclesiastical* first church required of the *civil* first church to show their authority. They had the property in their possession, and felt under obligation to deposit it in lawful hands. The civil committee could not then show their authority. Hence they were compelled to adjourn. On the second meeting, their authority was accepted and the business transacted. But what was this authority of the committee from the civil first church? The minister, being one of the committee, stated that a church meeting was regularly notified, both from the pulpit and by written notice posted. He was present at the church meeting, and three women, (two of whom had been excommunicated, and the other was under church discipline.) The minister himself had never been baptized, or joined any church whatever, as he acknowledged on the occasion. These three women, at this time, and under these circumstances, composed the entire *civil* first church, all the males and the other females having retired with those disposed, and built another house, near by, such as they were able. But these three women proceeded to choose this minister and two other men from the parish, to act as this committee.* Since the separation, the *civil* first church have kept their house open only a part of the time, — last winter about one third of the Sabbaths, and then often only to hear a sermon read!

Take another case, — the wealthy town of Framingham. Here was a large and flourishing church, — their silver plate alone was valued at several hundred dollars, — the avails of church collections at the sacrament. Here only one woman, as I am credibly informed, remained to constitute the *civil* first church,† and receive the plate, Records, &c. The separation took place under the same law, I believe, as that at Reading. In this case, the plate was not demanded. It was not, however, because the civil law‡ was not in their favor, but the injustice was too glaring! I have these facts from the most credible authority, though, in the latter case, I am not able to be very full. Numerous other similar instances might be collected, were it necessary, as Old Cambridge, Dedham, Bedford, Malden, &c., &c.

Now I ask for the morality of all this. Need we go to the Bible, or even to a 'lawyer,' to decide whether such things are right? Surely, good 'plain, common sense is sufficient.' What encouragement to the benevolent to leave funds for any charitable object whatever, if such perversions may be allowed and justified? But I sincerely believe the time will soon come, when such laws and decisions will be corrected. Such 'laws of the land' will not always 'remain.' While they do, however, I will

* See note three, on page 64.

† 'One person is a complete subject of baptism; but one person is incapable of being a church.' — *Camb. Plat.* chap. 4, sec. 5.

‡ As before interpreted.

endeavor to submit, as a 'worthy citizen,' and 'Christian minister.' I revere the laws and authority of old Massachusetts; as one of her native sons, I love her name and institutions well, and shall cherish none other than the best wishes for her highest civil and ecclesiastical welfare. (Nor shall I attempt to bring our early and most worthy ancestors into such unjust and dark repute, as some have vainly striven to do.) Such views and feelings, however, are in perfect harmony with a free expression of opinion in regard to any of her 'misdeeds and failures.'

I could cite other instances, in which I believe the laws of Massachusetts are evidently wrong, were it necessary. There have been several articles of some length in the 'Boston Recorder' a few weeks past, headed 'Sunday contracts,—the law wrong in Massachusetts.' The statute-book contains also, among several similar articles, for which the offender may 'be sentenced to death, by a general court-martial,' the following:—

'Any officer or soldier who shall desert.'

'Any officer or soldier who shall knowingly harbor or protect an enemy, or relieve them with money, victuals, or ammunition.* But the New Testament teaches, expressly, '*Love* your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you.† 'If thine *enemy* hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink,'‡ &c. Yet you say, 'No legislature in Massachusetts would dare enact laws to clash with the Divine laws.' 'I cannot believe the people of Massachusetts would permit a law, *manifestly* contrary to the laws of God, to stand on their statute-book an instant.' Read the above to a mere child, and he would tell you, there was 'manifest clashing.'

In passing, I will notice that the word 'formal' should have been enclosed in brackets instead of the parenthesis.

I have now a word to add, in review of what you say, touching the 'false statements, made in the history of the town.' First, in regard to the covenant itself. This, I say, and you admit, was adopted March 12, 1710–11. But you say, 'This will hardly answer' my 'purpose.' 'Until some time after they "became desirous of introducing a covenant," they had no knowledge of the existence of any such thing.' *Who* had no knowledge of this? Not, surely, those who adopted the covenant, in 1710–11. Not Dea. Israel Litchfield, who joined this church in July, 1776; nor Mr. Eleazar Peakes, who testifies (and *you* know his memory is as good as a *written* document) that Dea. Litchfield told him of this covenant on the 'Records,' and of having examined it about that time (1776). If you now turn to page 13 of our 'Manual,' you will find four of the survivors, (including the last mentioned,)

* Revised Statutes, Part I, Tit. 4, chap. 12, sec. 138, arts. 3 and 9.

† Matt. 5: 44.

‡ Rom. 12: 20.

who belonged to the Church before the separation, testifying as follows: '*Knowing* that the First Church in Scituate, — the dear Church of their Puritan fathers, — was originally evangelical, and still had a church-covenant, fully Trinitarian and evangelical, on their church-records,' &c. Dea. Howard White, another survivor, and one of the minority on our list, now a member of the Baptist church, testifies to the same fact. I know not how many others could testify, were it necessary to produce them. Pardon me, then, if I say, how 'preposterous, and even ridiculous,' for one who belongs to no church, and seems scarcely to have any true idea of what the name signifies, to charge upon 'good, pious, honest men,' acknowledged to be such, the *most deliberate falsehood*, respecting their sacred covenant! How can you, or the world in general, *know* all the vows and obligations Christians take upon themselves, or how extensive their knowledge respecting these things? * But it is not very strange, with such a Pastor as it appears was then set over the flock, that many out of the Church, and, perhaps, not a few even in the Church, 'had no knowledge of the existence of any such thing.' That there was evil, and a very 'loose state of things in this Church,' at that time, cannot be doubted. Nor is it much to the credit of the 'liberal' party, that 'when the Orthodox man, after various arguments in the case, said, "We must have a church meeting," that "the liberal man" replied, "Have it, then, — I shall not go near you." This, truly, sets the subject in not a very favorable light. The 'Records' state, that the request to the Pastor, (dated Nov. 20, 1824,) 'To appoint a meeting of the Church, on Thursday, the 25th of November instant, at one o'clock, P. M.,' was 'signed by a *large majority* of the Church.'

But to return to the covenant. You quote me as using the phrase, 'loose state with respect to *their* covenant,' and then add, 'that is, they knew of no covenant, and wanted one.' What is the meaning of the pronoun '*their*'? Does it not denote possession? Thus in two very short sentences intimately connected, you acknowledge and then flatly *deny* the very same thing! You seem, indeed, here driven to the greatest straits to keep up a *show* of argument. Take your comment on the words 'found' and 'renew,' as specimens of your reasoning. Can I not '*find*' a passage in history, or in the Bible, which I *knew of*, and was familiar with before? But you say, 'it would not have been a thing "found," had they known of it before.' So of the word 'renew.' Had you consulted a common dictionary, or known the familiar language of almost every Christian, you would not have written in this trifling way. Christians speak almost daily of

* My correspondent seems to have a kind of omniscience, in respect to some things. See also note, on page 21.

renewing their covenant vows, and especially at communion seasons.

But take another, and perhaps the only proper view of this subject. Says Webster, a 'covenant is a mutual consent or agreement of two or more persons, to do or to forbear some act or thing.—In church affairs, a solemn agreement between the members of a church, that they will walk together according to the precepts of the gospel, in brotherly affection.* Such a covenant was adopted 1710-11, by the First Church in Scituate. *When* was it laid aside by the Church? At what meeting? All power in a Congregational church rests with the majority, not with the pastor. Did this Church ever repeal their 'solemn agreement?' Where and when was the vote recorded? You, who have access to our 'Records,' can tell. If not, then does the old covenant stand in force, and all who enter the Church, not knowing the foundation on which they stand, greatly err. A church covenant may

* 'The word church' [in Greek, ἐκκλησία, from ἐκ, "out of," and κλέω, "to call,"] properly means those who are *called out*, and is applied to Christians, as being called out, or separated from the world. [See John 15: 18, 19] It means, sometimes, the whole body of believers; as Eph. 1: 22; 1 Cor. 10: 32. It means, also, a particular society of believers, worshipping in one place; as Acts 8: 1; 9: 31; 1 Cor. 1: 2, &c.' 'In common language, it means the Church *visible*,—that is, all who profess religion; or *invisible*,—that is, all who are real Christians, professors or not.' 'It is used in classic writers, to denote an *assembly* of any kind, and is twice thus used in the New Testament. Acts 19: 39, 41.' (*Barnes.*) 'A *Congregational church* is, by the institution of Christ, a part of the militant visible church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by an holy covenant, for the public worship of God, and the mutual edification of one another in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.' (*Camb. Plat.* chap. 2, sec. 6.) 'Saints by calling must have a visible political union among themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church.' 'This form is the visible covenant, agreement or consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together in the same society, which is usually called the church covenant; for we see not otherwise how members can have church power over one another mutually.' (*Camb. Plat.* chap. 4, secs. 1 and 3.) Says Dr. Emmons, 'How did they [the Apostles] form churches? and how are churches now to be formed? or what is it, that constitutes a number of visible saints a proper church? I answer a mutual covenant. It is by confederation that a number of individual Christians become a visible church of Christ. A number of professing Christians cannot be formed into a church, without their freely and mutually covenanting to walk together in all the duties and ordinances of the gospel. They may be real and visible saints, while they remain unconnected and separate; but they cannot be a proper church, without entering into covenant, and laying themselves under certain obligations to each other, to live and act like Christians. A number of Christians merely living in the same city, town, or parish, does not make them a church. Nor do they become a church by usually meeting together for social or public worship. Nor does baptism constitute a person a member of any particular church. Nothing besides a covenant can give *form* to a church, or be a sufficient bond of union.' (*Works*, vol. 5, pages 445, 446.)

in some respects be compared to a constitution of government, which stands in force till repealed, whether all the subjects of that government are acquainted with it or not. But it is evident this Church, or at least, the more intelligent part of it, did know to some extent their foundation, though in a 'loose state.' They speak of this covenant, as that 'on which this Church *has* stood for more than a century.' (The 'Records' say '*has* stood,' which was changed to '*had* stood' in the 'Manual,' (p. 7,) to harmonize with another past tense.) Moreover, the 'Records' inform us, that at the Church-meeting, held December 25, 1824, 'Rev. Mr. Thomas proposed that a committee of three be chosen to assist him to attend to revise or amend the old covenant, and lay the same before the Church, as soon as is convenient, for their approbation. Paul Merritt, Eleazar Peakes, and Levi Vinal, were chosen for the above purpose.' But it appears, that at the next meeting, regularly notified, the Church renewed the old covenant instead of one revised or amended from it. Hence we learn from the history, as well as from living witnesses, and the nature of the covenant, that the First Church in Scituate were then (in 1824) standing on the old covenant. I say, then, that Mr. Deane's language plainly and naturally conveys a false idea to the candid reader, and hence his statement must be regarded as 'false.' And this, as you imply, if false, he 'must have made knowingly,' as many others also believe.

Again, you reply to my inquiry, whether 'the facts, the Bible, and common sense' do not decide, that we are 'not only the First Trinitarian Church of Christ in Scituate, but the First Church in Scituate,' as follows: First, in respect to 'the facts.' 'No, they seceded and formed a new Society.' This is a very summary answer, truly; but nothing to do with the point at issue, as before abundantly shown. In your view, however, if the fact had been, that every member of the Church had seceded, the *First* Church, (though *no* church) had still remained!! Again you inquire, does 'the Bible' decide in our favor? Here you ask, 'In what chapter and verse is it recorded, that your Church is the First Church in Scituate?' A question in part, very much like that put by an ancient ruler, (John 3: 4.) But you will find the principles laid down in Acts 6: 1-6 and 15: 1-32, and elsewhere in the New Testament.* Congregationalism, as to church order and government, is believed to be derived from 'the Bible.' That majorities settled questions, as to church officers and discipline, is evident from the passages above referred to, *choosing* evidently implies this.† But one important consideration further.

* See also Matt. 18: 15-17. Acts 1: 15, 23-26. 14: 23. 1 Cor. 5: 1-13 2. Cor. 2: 6, &c.

† Says Mosheim, 'The power of enacting laws,' [in the primitive churches,] 'of appointing teachers and ministers, and of determining controversies,

We read in the New Testament much about 'churches,' as 'the church at Jerusalem' — 'at Corinth,' 'Ephesus,' 'Antioch,' &c., &c., but nothing of parishes, or civil societies, as connected with them and controlling them. Individuals were, indeed, somewhat controlled, when brought before governors and kings and imprisoned or beheaded; but I do not recollect of any parish, or even a governor, taking charge of the affairs of the churches, as such. The church and state were 'severed,' for a time, doubtless, even centuries 'ago.'

The facts appear to be simply these. The gospel, regarding all mankind, 'by nature the children of wrath,' and as 'dead in trespasses and sins,'* introduces a system of means (including the agency of the Holy Ghost) for their regeneration and salvation. As men are regenerated, or born again of the Spirit, they become members of Christ's spiritual church, of which he is the Head. He has made it the duty of such to unite also with his external or visible church,† for the purpose of the more orderly support of gospel worship, instruction, and ordinances. The New Testament teaches us that the early converts did thus associate. But as the gospel spread, and its temporal as well as spiritual blessings were perceived, many, not professedly regenerated, have been disposed to meet with the church and assist them in these objects. Rejoicing in this willingness, both from the hope that these individuals might thus become savingly acquainted with the gospel, and from its diminishing their own pecuniary expense, the church gladly welcomed their presence and aid. Hence the origin of religious societies and parishes. They are something added, not the original root. But, alas! occasionally, churches have *suffered* from such kindness. In our day, they have too often been treated by some of those societies, much as was the kind husbandman, who received to his bosom the cold and stiffened serpent. When a little warmed, he *bit his benefactor*. Now, dear Sir, look again into your Bible, and let its pure light assist you in reviewing your hasty decision. I need not add, to show the proper decision of 'common sense,' after such facts and the Bible have spoken.

Secondly. In regard to the majority. Mr. Deane says, 'but not having a majority of the Church,' &c. I ask, 'Is not this statement false?' and you reply, 'No;'; and thus prove the adage, 'a man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still.' You come to this conclusion, by refusing to look at, or acknowl-

was lodged in the people' [church members] 'at large; nor did the Apostles, although invested with divine authority, either resolve on, or sanction, anything whatever, without the knowledge and concurrence of the general body of Christians, of which the church was composed.' — *Mosheim, in Carpenter.*

* Eph. 2: 3, 1.

† See 'Church Manual,' p. 19, Disc.

edge one part of my proof, which I will now state a little more definitely. You admit the twelve, who acted in the dismissal of Rev. Mr. Thomas, to be Trinitarians, though you take some exception at the moral character of one of them. Leaving him for the present, I wish to direct your particular notice to the other part of my proof, 'that several others of the minority, soon after withdrew and united with Trinitarian churches.' If you think this general statement not sufficient, I will be a little more definite, confirming it by the following testimony, gathered in part since I commenced this communication.

'This may certify, that I was present at the meeting of the First Church of Christ in Scituate, held February 6, 1825, and advocated and approved the renewal of the ancient covenant then adopted, my religious sentiments having been and still are fully Trinitarian and Calvinistic. (Signed,)

SCITUATE, October 2, 1844.'

HOWARD WHITE.

'This may certify, that at the time of the renewal of the ancient covenant of the First Church of Christ in Scituate, February 6, 1825, my sentiments were decidedly Trinitarian and Calvinistic, and have been from that day to this, as well as for years previous to that event, and that I should have come off with the rest, had I not found it would have created difficulties, greater than I feared I could meet. (Signed,)

SCITUATE, October 2, 1844.'

SIMEON VINAL.

The opinion of Mr. John Studley, (now deceased,) who came off soon after the separation, is well known as Trinitarian and Calvinistic. Mr. W. also states that he *approved* of the dismissal of Mr. Thomas by the Church, and should have been present at that meeting and voted with the majority, had not some Providence prevented. We have then, at least, *fifteen to nine*, (including the Pastor,) in favor of the old covenant, or Trinitarians; quite a fair, and one would think, among people of common discernment, an indisputable majority. This is also in perfect harmony with the fact, that 'a large majority,' 'signed' the request for 'a church meeting,' and also, with your own acknowledgments, 'that the liberal part of the Church did not attend the Church-meetings. The Pastor, and perhaps some few others, attended a few of the first.' It is beautiful to see how all things harmonize, when we get into the path of truth.

We learn, also, from the above, that our 'majority, 12,' would have become 14 to 10, or rather 15 to 8, instead of 12 to 11, (the Pastor having no right to vote under such circumstances,) in the dismissal of Rev. Mr. Thomas, had not peculiar circumstances prevented.*

* It may be proper here to state more definitely the nature of this majority. To the casual observer, it might appear that the vote, actually

A word now in respect to the objectionable character. How could *you*, dear Sir, thus disturb 'the ashes of the dead?' You say, he 'had paid no tax in the Parish, had not partaken the Sacrament with the Church, or been to meeting there but rarely if at all, for thirty or forty years,' &c. It is well known that one reason why he did not attend that meeting and sacrament was, that he did not approve the sentiments there advanced. He was constant in Rev. Mr. Grosvenor's ministry, and whenever Calvinistic candidates preached, (between the years '80 and '87,) till Mr. Dawes was settled. But during his ministry and that of his successor, he seldom attended meeting, except when occasional Calvinistic preaching was enjoyed in his neighborhood. Another reason, (perhaps occasioned by the loose preaching, and state of things at that day,) he became intemperate in his habits, no very uncommon sin in those days, for I am most credibly informed, that at least two of the small minority, for one in the majority were at least equally intemperate, sometimes coming even to the sacrament in a very improper state, and leaving it in a worse. This man had too much good sense and intelligence

passed, April 29, 1825, by which Rev. Mr. Thomas was dismissed, was nearly, if not quite, *equal*, allowing a vote to Rev. Mr. Thomas. But it should be remembered, that after several of the first meetings, in which it was found, that a large majority of the Church were Trinitarians and dissatisfied with their Pastor, the few Unitarians, who upheld Mr. Thomas, refused generally to attend the church meetings. After the fair renewal of the old covenant, in February, the Pastor, and 'liberal part of the Church, did not attend the church meetings.' They were all *absent* from the meeting of his dismissal, so that we may say with propriety, that THIS VOTE OF DISMISSION WAS UNANIMOUS. The Church were duly notified by a committee appointed for that purpose at a regular meeting, and if any refused to attend, their *vote* of course could not be properly counted on either side. If a party in any town, are sensible they cannot outvote their opponents in a particular measure, and hence generally or universally stay away from a regular meeting, when the question is to be tried, and thus perhaps allow a unanimous vote to pass, will such conduct on their part *annul* said meeting, or compel those who attend on their duty to run over town, and learn how each man stands in regard to the question, and then count his vote, as if present? So with regard to this Church-meeting. All, or nearly all, of the majority list, as given in the 'Manual,' were present and voted, while none of the minority list were present, and thus deprived themselves of action in this case. Those lists were thus arranged from the immediate proceedings of the two parties in withdrawing from the old parish. From that date, this majority considered their Pastor as dismissed, and proceeded, as the First Church, to procure another, whom they settled the following year. Soon after Mr. Howard White withdrew and joined the Baptist church, Mr. John Studley came over to the majority, and recently Mr. Simeon Vinal has made request to be restored in good standing with our Church. These are the simple facts in the case. And they show most unquestionably that Mr. Thomas was truly dismissed as Pastor of the Church, and also that far too much has been yielded by the many to the few, or no argument whatever could have been urged against the validity of that dismissal.

to be guilty of such inconsistency. But he was poor, and unable to pay a 'tax,' while the others were gentlemen of some property. Now I leave it for you and others to decide, which would be the most desirable associate, or the party in the Church which acted most inconsistently in regard to these individuals. I regret the necessity of disclosing such painful events, but you will remember who is the author of this necessity.

When a church has so far degenerated as to give up the choice of a pastor exclusively to the parish, to invite all the congregation disposed, whether professors or not, to partake with them at the sacrament, and not to discipline members, with whom they would not associate 'in the common business of life,' or 'judge them fit companions,' I must also acknowledge, what you seem to take for granted, that there is no difference between a Church and a Parish !*

Thirdly. In regard to the date. This I am willing to relinquish, as being immaterial and unworthy of dispute.

From what has been said, it is evident, the whole paragraph under examination, from Mr. Deane's 'History,' should read something as follows : In A. D. 1824, a large majority of the First Church, being greatly dissatisfied with the present loose state of things, particularly with regard to their Covenant and Confession of Faith, became desirous to renew and 'establish' more firmly their ancient covenant, which recognized the doctrine of the Trinity. This was effected by a fair majority, early in the following year. But the Pastor not approving this covenant (being a Unitarian) refused to take any notice of the regular votes and proceedings of his Church, and three fourths [perhaps] of the Parish, with a few of his Church, sustaining him in this course, the Church, as a body, were led to the painful necessity of dismissing him as their Pastor, and even of withdrawing from the house, where their fathers worshipped ; all of which was done, in exact accordance with the approbation and advice of a regular Ecclesiastical Council convened for the purpose. During this spring (1825) they also formed a new Society.

This is a true account of the matter ; but how poorly it coincides with Mr. Deane's statement, can be seen by the discerning and impartial. 'Perhaps it is needless now for me to say, that in my opinion you have entirely failed' to justify Mr. Deane's statements, and I doubt not the decision of every candid, unprejudiced mind, will agree with me in this conclusion.

* Says Dr. Emmons, 'It is a dark mark against professors of religion, that they are generally so backward to discharge the duty of gospel discipline towards their offending brethren. [Matt. 18 : 15-17.] By this neglect, they may suffer the leaven of corruption to spread gradually, until it has leavened the whole lump, and ruined the whole church.' 1 Cor. 5 : 6-8. — *Works*, vol. v. p. 456.

If so, you 'will join with me in condemning the falsehoods, and in making them public.' If you and I cannot decide, the *public* must.

'They had not then perhaps been taught that disobedience to the civil law was a duty.' For whom you intend this I am not aware. If for myself, I can truly say, I am not conscious of having said or done any thing to justify such a remark. I presume, however, you will not disagree with me, in such a case as the Salem witchcraft, that, were the same laws to exist now as formerly, 'disobedience' would be a virtue, rather than a sin. I advocate disobedience to civil law on no other grounds; and even here, where we can innocently submit, though with suffering, (as in the case of our funds,) I cling to obedience to law, till that law shall be repealed by the proper authority; so that you and others associated with you, may rest contented (so far as I am concerned) to feed on another's bread, till conscience and a sense of duty may lead you to relinquish our funds, with interest, to the First Church of Christ in Scituate, and the Society connected with it. We ask not for funds, given to support Unitarianism, if you have such, but for those given by our Calvinistic fathers, and evidently for the support of Calvinistic worship. I am willing that Unitarians, and other errorists, should have full liberty of speech, and advocate their doctrines, however destructive, if they will, but I wish to see them do it honorably and fairly—upon their own and not another's capital! It is this latter evil of which I complain. Often has a church been turned out of their house of worship, and then (unless there was a large fund connected) has the door been locked for a large part or the entire year together. Such houses are monuments of injustice. But the 'waning power' of Unitarianism is not always to be unrighteously sustained, by a virtuous and impartial legislature and judiciary. I doubt not still more enlightened times are at hand. Several of the old societies, which had driven out the church from their houses of worship, have recently invited them to return, and enjoy the pastor of their choice, as in Berlin, Acton, &c.* This is as it should be, or, if the separation be continued, let strict justice be done by both parties.

You inquire, 'For what purpose' is our 'Manual' published, 'calling up the whole matter' (of prejudices and difficulties) 'anew for discussion and altercation.' I think, Sir, what has already been written will sufficiently answer this inquiry, and 'point' to the 'benefit' both 'spiritual and temporal,' which ought to spring from it, and from this investigation. I doubt not you, and many of your associates, would be glad to have been

* I may add, Gardner, Princeton, &c.

left without discussion and disturbance in your present possessions. So does the slaveholder wish to be *let alone*. But, says Burke, on the use of agitation, 'I love *clamor* when there is *abuse*. The alarm-bell disturbs the inhabitants, but saves them from being burnt in their beds.' The circumstances called for our 'Manual.' Our old people, and those most intimately acquainted with the facts were fast dying off, while the title of 'First Church' was still claimed by both parties. It seemed both reasonable and important therefore, that it should be decided while *living witnesses* could testify. But if 'old prejudices' are 'to wear out' by neglecting truth and justice, and the salvation of souls, unwilling as I am, naturally, for strife and contention, I should still prefer, like Paul, to be 'disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.' A state of agitation is preferable to one of moral death!

Your poetic close. It is no new thing for evil-doers to charge severity upon the faithful, because they declare unto men their sins and the inevitable consequences thereof. At such times, nothing is more common than to claim for themselves a large share of 'liberality' and 'charity.' But the Puritans, or their legitimate descendants, will make no compromise with error, or fear to declare the whole counsel of God whether men will hear or forbear: and should the land of their fathers again prove unworthy of them, I doubt not they will be willing again to suffer the loss of all things, for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, and seek for another wilderness in some new world, where they may enjoy their religion, and plant another New England, with all her beloved institutions!

I might dwell on several other points, touched upon in your letters, but I have already, perhaps, quite wearied your patience. I have regretted the introduction of foreign matter, and also the necessity laid upon me, of taking up first principles—the mere elements of ecclesiastical usage, in order to make myself understood. I may also add, it is much easier to make 'charges' or 'false statements' than to refute or sustain them. I am also happy to see, that you find no more things of importance in our 'Manual,' which 'seem strange' to you, and that these arise principally, at least, from overlooking the first principles of Congregationalism.

It will be seen, I trust, that after all you have said to overthrow *ecclesiastical* authority, (which is derived from Christ, the Head of the Church,) it would, on the same principle, equally overthrow all *civil* authority. But it is vain to make such sweeping inferences. I doubt not, both the civil and ecclesiastical power will remain, notwithstanding some 'misdeeds and failures,' both by ecclesiastics and civilians. These authorities, as we have seen, need not necessarily interfere with each other. They move, or

should move, in different spheres, and, like different elements in nature, would harmonize with and support each other,* did not men attempt to draw inferences with horse power, or weigh gold and silver in scales of logic. Yes, dear Sir, the Church and ecclesiastical authority will stand, though Voltaire, the earth, and 'the gates of hell' even, should strive against them. They have already stood many a blast from the enemy, but each vain effort has been like the stormy winds upon the sturdy oak, only serving to fasten its roots more firmly among the rocks below. It is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom to his saints. The Church is dearer to Him than the apple of his eye, and he will especially stand by it in the hour of assault and trial.

I fear, dear Sir, that, unless you change your course and spirit, you will be found, at last, to have been fighting against God and his people. I do, therefore, affectionately and earnestly solicit your attention to a resurvey of this whole matter, and also to a serious and prayerful examination of the Word of God, in reference to the evidence of your hopes for eternity. You may trifle with such suggestions now, but another day may disclose to you and others the infinite folly of such derision. Believe me not to be your enemy, because I have attempted to tell you the truth. I wish you and your Society no other harm,—yea, a similar blessing,—that the sincere and virtuous abolitionist does the slaveholder, in showing him his sin, and the path of duty, that he may repent and reform. And I hope, that, laying aside all prejudice and bitterness, you and your Society will exhibit such a spirit and such conduct, in reference to the subject in hand, as you and every true friend of the slave would wish to behold in the master. Examine, dear Sir, with candor and impartiality, all the facts and circumstances in this case, and may the Lord enable you to decide in his fear, what is truth, and what is duty. That the blessing of Almighty God may ever rest upon you and yours, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

Your unworthy Servant,

DANIEL WIGHT, JR.

P. S. I have delayed sending this several days longer than I otherwise should, from your expected absence from town, &c. If I have used severity, I have endeavored, so far as I know my-

* 'Church government stands in no opposition to civil government. They may both stand together and flourish,—the one being helpful unto the other in their distinct and due administrations.' 'As it is unlawful for church officers to meddle with the sword of the magistrate, so it is unlawful for the magistrate to meddle with the work proper to church officers.'—*Camb. Plat.* chap. 17, secs. 2 and 5.

self, that it should be only the severity of truth. At this we ought not to complain. It will be understood that our Correspondence on this subject is now 'finished.' I am satisfied it would be useless to continue it any longer, and shall not therefore consider myself under obligation to add.*

* See Appendix, Note E, p. 61.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A. [Referred to on p. 26.]

The following quotations (in harmony with notes on pages 24, 25) will throw light upon the authority of this dismissal:

'*Ordination*, we account nothing else but the solemn putting a man into his place and office in the church, whereunto he had right before by election; being like the installing of a magistrate in the commonwealth. Ordination, therefore, is not to go before, but to follow election. The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the church, does not consist in his *ordination*, but in his voluntary and free election, by the church, and his accepting that election; whereupon is founded that relation between pastor and flock, between such a minister and such a people. Ordination does not constitute an officer, nor give him the essentials of his office.'—*Camb. Plat.* chap. 9, sec. 2.

Cyprian says, that, 'in his time,' [A. D. 200—260,] 'the people' [that is, members of the church] 'had the *power*, as of choosing worthy ministers, so, likewise, of refusing and casting off those who were not so; that this power belongs to the church, and that it was given to the church by divine authority.' (*Cyprian*, in *Punchard*, p. 196.) *Origen* says, 'If I seem to you to be a right hand, and am called a *Presbyter*, [Pastor,] 'and seem to preach the Word of God; yet, if I shall do any thing contrary to ecclesiastical discipline, and the rule of the gospel, so that I give scandal or offence to the church, let the whole church conspire, and with one consent cut me off; although I am their right hand.' (*Origen*, in *Punchard*, p. 196.) The learned *Grotius* says, 'It was not only the right of the people to flee and avoid an unfaithful Pastor, but that such a Pastor, by virtue of the sentence against him, lost his *pastoral right*.' (*Grotius*, in *Punchard*, p. 196.) *Dr. Emmons*, of our own day, says, that 'As a church have a right to choose and ordain their own minister,' [Pastor,] 'so they must have, of course, a right to *dismiss* him for what they deem good reasons. Those who have a right to put into office, have a right to put out of office. The church either puts their ministers into office, or delegate power to neighboring ministers to do it for them, which is the same thing as doing it themselves.' (*Works*, vol. 5, p. 451.) 'They' [the church] 'have a right to *dismiss* their own minister, whenever they judge he has forfeited his ministerial character. The right of dismission belongs *solely to the church*, who may dismiss their minister without the advice or contrary to the advice of a council, if they think he has forfeited his ministerial character; but not otherwise. (*Emmons*, in *Punchard*, p. 197.) 'Congregational churches have the power to *dismiss their pastors* as they have to *ordain* them, without advice of council; but if they *ordain* by the advice and the assistance of neighboring churches, consistency requires, that they should *dismiss* by the same advice and assistance.' (*Punchard*, p. 132.)

By comparing the above principles with the steps taken in Rev. Mr. Thomas's dismissal, it will be seen that he was, indeed, truly dismissed, according to the most sound ecclesiastical and Congregational usage. The ecclesiastical council gave advice, and the Church accepted and followed it.

NOTE B. [Referred to on p. 27.]

I take this opportunity to state some of the facts which called forth this information. I do this, not only to illustrate the paragraph, with which this note is connected, but also to correct the false impression upon the minds of many in this community, unfavorable to myself, as connected with what may be called the 'Beech-woods difficulty.' Before stating the facts, relative to this difficulty, I will mention two events, bearing upon the subject, as preliminary. Soon after my ordination, in the fall of 1842, 'The Young Ladies and Gentlemen's Total Abstinence Association' held a temperance meeting, in commemoration of the death of two of their members, to which the different ministers of the place were invited. After other exercises, I was called upon to address the meeting. In the remarks offered, I endeavored to show, that although temperance encourages morality, in various ways, yet we need something more than mere morality to prepare us for death and heaven. Rev. Mr. Sewall followed, in other remarks, the tendency of which was to overthrow what I had advanced. This was noticed by many, if not all present. At first, I thought of replying on the spot; but being a comparative stranger in the place, and not wishing to get into a controversy, if it could be consistently avoided, I let it pass in silence. The fourth of July following we held a Sabbath School celebration, including the schools connected with our own, the Baptist, and Methodist churches, not inviting, formally, the Unitarian school. This gave some offence. But we knew that little could be said to any purpose on such an occasion, without giving, perhaps, still greater offence, and accordingly we followed the now more general practice on such occasions. The remarks at the temperance meeting had also taught us what to expect. These two meetings (the temperance and Sabbath school) had, doubtless, an influence on the Beech-woods difficulty.

In Dec. 1842, I commenced holding religious meetings at the house of Capt. Henry Damon, who lives in the Beech-woods neighborhood,* and continued them, without interruption, till the July following. The school-house, in this district, had been closed for years against all religious meetings, but during this winter was opened for a temperance meeting. We had much desired this house for religious meetings, and especially for a Sabbath school, and had occasionally spoken on the subject with some in the district. I had delivered a lyceum lecture in several neighboring places, and was requested to deliver the same in this school-house, if it could be obtained for the purpose. Hoping it might prepare the way for opening the house for a Sabbath school and religious meetings, I consented, and, by making some additions, delivered two lectures instead of one. This was in May, 1843. It soon appeared that there would, probably, be no difficulty in obtaining the school-house for a Sabbath school and preaching every Sabbath evening. It may be proper here to state, that this large neighborhood is situated about four miles from any meeting-house, and has suffered much from the want of a nearer place of worship. It is also about six

* The neighborhood here intended is in the northwest part of Scituate, School District No. 5.

miles from the residence of Rev. Mr. Sewall; and as he had seldom or never held Sabbath evening meetings since his settlement here, (some 12 or 14 years,) it was not even imagined that he would wish to join us, if desired; and much less to make interference, from his well known gentlemanly conduct. Accordingly, arrangements were made to establish a Sabbath school, to be held every Sabbath evening, at 5 1-2 o'clock, and preaching at 6 1-2 o'clock. As the Baptist Society had a considerable number of families in this district, and as some of the district adjoining, in Cohasset, where Rev. Mr. Babcock had several families, wished to unite, I proposed to the Baptist minister, Rev. Mr. Damon, and to Rev. Mr. Babcock, to unite with me in this object, to which they cheerfully agreed. We then made arrangements to carry on the school and meeting together,—each preaching in order, once in three weeks. Notice was given accordingly, and the school was organized July 16th, with nine classes. The next Sabbath evening the house was more than full, and the prospects of usefulness very gratifying. But these prospects were soon darkened. At the close of this meeting, request was made to the Rev. Mr. Conant,* (the Baptist minister, who had just commenced laboring in their Society, but who did not know, definitely, what arrangements had been made,) to notify a meeting in that house, for Rev. Mr. Sewall, to be held a fortnight from that evening, at the very hour of our services. It appears that he had heard what was in progress, and visited one of his principal men in the district, and got him to consult more or less of the district, to see if *they* were willing that *he* should join us in our meeting; and if so, to request the above notice. I had not been consulted at all, and knew nothing of it till after the notice was given. I did not blame the district, as they did not, probably, foresee the difficulty which must necessarily follow. The next Tuesday, I had an interview with several neighboring ministers of the Norfolk Association, who met on that day, and asked their advice, which perfectly harmonized with my own previous views. On Thursday, I called on Rev. Mr. Sewall, to learn *why* he had thus interfered,—supposing he must have been ignorant of the circumstances, and the arrangements previously made; but found it otherwise. He supposed that perhaps one third of the district belonged to his Society; one third to the Baptist and one third to ours; and he could not allow us to occupy the whole ground, to disseminate our principles, &c. and not allow him an equal chance to defend his; and as for Mr. Babcock and his people, they had no right in the house, or any share in the school or meetings,—he would not suffer it, &c. He was willing, however, to unite with me and the Baptist minister, in sustaining the meeting, and said he could heartily recommend his people to attend our school and meeting, and inquired why I could not recommend my people to come and hear him? In reply, I told him I must first inquire whether he believed in certain doctrines,—as the supreme Divinity of Christ; the Trinity; Total Depravity; the Atonement, &c., to which he answered, one by one, in the *negative*. I then told him here was my reason, why I could not encourage my people to attend on his instruction, or join with him in union meetings,—that I regarded the rejection of these doctrines (mentioned in the Correspondence) as a virtual rejection of Christianity, and destructive to the souls of men! I told him, I was willing he should have the school-house, if he wished, every day and evening in the week, except the two hours we had selected; that I wished not to restrict his liberty of speech, in the least; that there were twenty other school-houses in town, and other neighborhoods as destitute, perhaps, as this, where he might labor; and I assured him, if he made a beginning elsewhere, I would not thus interfere; the field is wide

* Mr. Conant took the place of Mr. Damon about this time.

enough for us both, &c.; but I could not consent to give up this house, during the hours for which we had made arrangements, &c. He replied, we had selected the *best hours* for a meeting; that few could be assembled on week day evenings, &c. I replied, that our meetings for the past seven months had been on Wednesday evenings, and were well attended; our assemblies had varied, perhaps, from 25 to 75; also, that if, after twelve years experience in Scituate, he had found out that between 5 and 7 o'clock, Sabbath evening, was the *very best* time for a religious meeting, I hoped he would improve it in future, &c. After this conversation, of several hours, in his study, I left him, telling him that I hoped, on further reflection, he would think differently on the subject,—see that such interference was unchristian and ungentlemanly, and let me know his decision before the Sabbath.

On returning from this interview, I called at the Baptist meeting-house, where a meeting was in session. At the close of the meeting, I made known to some of the brethren this conversation, and after some consultation, we thought it best to visit the district, and obtain another place, if possible, for the school and meetings, and to give up the school-house. The next morning, two of the Baptist brethren went among their families in the district, and Mr. Orange Litchfield went with me to obtain another place. Calling on Capt. Damon, we found the Rev. Mr. Sewall there before us, persuading him to give his consent. We then had another interview of several hours, before these witnesses, when the denial of the aforesaid doctrines (mentioned more fully in the Correspondence) was again made, namely, Total Depravity, Regeneration, the Atonement, the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and his unbelief in the eternity of future punishment. This part of the Correspondence has been read to them, and they testify to its correctness [by their own written signatures]. In closing this second conversation, Mr. Sewall consented to withdraw entirely from the field, unless we could permit him to take his turn in preaching,—promising, however, that if we would consent to his joining with us, he would advance no sentiments in opposition to ours,—that he would *conform* to our doctrines so far as he went, &c. &c.

With these new developments, we felt still less inclined to unite, as such a union would only tend to give the appearance that we were all one in doctrine, while in fact we are 'so diametrically opposite.' We therefore concluded to withdraw entirely from the school-house to a private dwelling, which those Baptist brethren had found, [that morning,] and which we could have with but little expense and trouble. It was the opinion of some in the district, that if we attempted to remain in the school-house, we should be disturbed and it was thought prudent, therefore, to retire at once. We were thus virtually driven from this place by the above interference. The school and meetings were continued with general interest, and, we believe, with profit, till Dec. The next January, a plan was formed of building a small union chapel in this neighborhood, for evangelical purposes, and some two hundred dollars and more have since been raised for this object. Whether this plan will ultimately succeed, is yet to be seen. No Sabbath school and but few meetings have been enjoyed in this part of the town the past season, because the school-house was considered closed, and no other place, suitable, could be obtained for the purpose. If souls perish in this neighborhood, through this neglect, who will be to blame? Rev. Mr. Sewall has never preached in this school-house, before or since this difficulty, though the house was open for years for such an object, since his settlement here. The fable of 'the dog in the manger' appears thus fully illustrated in this affair.

But many still say, why did we not submit, and go on together in those meetings? Unitarians themselves have given the true answer; it would

be a sinful 'compromise,' which 'neither can nor ought to be' made, — an effort to blend 'light and darkness,' 'Christ and Belial,' — things admitted both by Unitarians and Orthodox as impossibilities. Why, then, force us to attempt impossibilities, or charge us with blame for not attempting them?

Having given, as I believe, a fair and correct statement of these facts, I leave the candid to pass their own judgment.

SCITUATE, Dec. 25, 1844.

'This may certify, that we, the undersigned, having been more or less intimately acquainted with the facts, relative to the Beech-woods difficulty, (so called,) from the time of their occurrence, can testify, that, so far as we are personally informed, we believe the above statements are impartial and correct.

(Signed,)

	THOMAS CONANT, }
	FRANKLIN DAMON, }
<i>Ministers of the Baptist Church, in Scituate, in 1843.</i>	DANIEL H. BABCOCK,
<i>Pastor of the Second Church, in Cohasset.</i>	PAUL CLAPP, }
	EDWARD JAMES, }
<i>Superintendents of the Beech-woods Sabbath school, 1843.</i>	HENRY DAMON, 2d,
	BENJAMIN PRATT, JR.
	SAMUEL HUNT,
	ORANGE LITCHFIELD.

The above persons, who have thus kindly given me their signatures, are among those most intimately acquainted with the whole difficulty, either living in the immediate neighborhood, or having been more or less actively engaged in the Sabbath school or meeting. The document is considered important, not only as exhibiting the facts, in regard to the Beech-woods difficulty, but as it discloses, at least negatively, some of the peculiar sentiments of Unitarianism, — sentiments that are still acknowledged openly with great reluctance. Language employed 15 or 20 years since, is still, in some measure, applicable to this Unitarian concealment. 'For some cause or other, they have manifested a disposition to keep back and conceal their sentiments. They have shown a reluctance to come out frankly and openly, and make the world acquainted with their views. In many instances, they have employed words and phrases similar to those in popular use, but employed them in a disguised and peculiar sense. And their sentiments have come to be known, so far as they are known, only in consequence of incidental disclosures, or as they have been drawn out by the force of discussion.' An aged Unitarian minister is reported as saying, in his charge to a young minister, 'The time has been when our peculiar sentiments were so unpopular, that it was hazardous to teach them. We were obliged to conceal them from public view, or disclose them in ambiguous language.' A writer in the 'Christian Examiner' says, 'Little time has elapsed since an objection to the chief doctrines of Orthodoxy could not be whispered safely.' 'I can remember the time, and I am not old, when, though Boston was full of Unitarian sentiment, there was no open profession of it. A dead silence was maintained in the pulpit on doctrinal subjects, — a silence which was not disturbed by the press.' (Vol. 3. pp. 113, 114.) Numerous quotations from Unitarians and others, on this subject, might be given, were it necessary. The following, with the above, must suffice. Says Dr. Miller, 'In all ages, from the time of Ebieen to the present hour, where the mass of the surrounding population was Orthodox, Unitarians have manifested a

disposition to conceal their sentiments, — to equivocate, to evade, and even solemnly to deny them, when questioned, and to disguise themselves under the garb of Orthodoxy, to a degree which no other sect, calling itself Christian, ever manifested. To what, I ask, is this fact to be ascribed? I leave it with you, Christian brethren, to solve the question. I will only say, that I can think of no possible reason for it, but such as must stamp the character of deep corruption upon the Unitarian cause.' 'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness, shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.' (2 Pet. 2: 1—3.) 'For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.' (Jude 4.) Says another writer, 'Unitarianism, whatever may be its character in other respects, will be found uniformly to have borne these marks of error. Wherever introduced, it has been brought in "privily,"—has "crept in unawares."' This we know to have been true, in regard to the introduction of Unitarianism into this Commonwealth. There is still on the part of many in this community, an attempt to smooth over all differences between the Orthodox and Unitarian systems, as if we were all essentially one, though, in reality, as opposite as the poles. But we have no confidence in any such concealment, deception, or flattery. Let facts speak for themselves, and the community would remain no longer deceived; they would be prepared to take an intelligent and decided stand.

NOTE C. [Referred to on p. 35.]

The following is the extract referred to: 'Sir, I take it upon myself to say, that in no country in the world, upon either continent, can there be found a body of ministers of the gospel who perform so much service to man, in such a full spirit of self-denial, under so little encouragement from government of any kind, and under circumstances, always much straitened and often distressed, as the ministers of the gospel, in the United States, of all denominations!

'They form no part of any established order of religion: they constitute no hierarchy; they enjoy no peculiar privileges, in some of the States they are even shut out from all participation in the political rights and privileges enjoyed by their fellow-citizens; they enjoy no tithes,—no public provision of any kind. And except here and there, in large cities, where a wealthy individual occasionally makes a donation for the support of public worship, what have they to depend upon? They have to depend entirely on the voluntary contributions of those who hear them.

'And this body of clergymen has shown, to the honor of their own country, and to the astonishment of the hierarchies of the old world, that it is practicable, in free governments, to raise and sustain a body of clergymen, which, for devotedness to their sacred calling, for purity of life and character, for learning, intelligence, piety, and that wisdom which cometh from above, is inferior to none, and superior to most others, by voluntary contributions alone.

‘I hope that our learned men have done something for the honor of our literature abroad. I hope that the courts of justice and members of the bar of this country have done something to elevate the character of the profession of the law. I hope that the discussions above (in Congress) have done something to meliorate the condition of the human race, to secure and extend the great charter of human rights, and to strengthen and advance the great principles of human liberty. But I contend that no literary efforts, no adjudications, no constitutional discussions, — nothing that has been done or said in favor of the great interests of universal man, has done this country more credit, at home and abroad, than the establishment of our body of clergymen, their support by voluntary contributions, and the general excellence of their character, their piety, and learning.’

NOTE D. [Referred to on p. 35.]

The following extracts are from a Sermon, which came to hand just as this Correspondence was ready for the press. It would be interesting if reprinted entire, notwithstanding its *quaintness*, as it would show, in no small degree, the religious sentiments then received. It is entitled, ‘A Sermon, preached in the First Parish in Scituate, April 20, 1763, at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Grosvenor, to the Pastoral Office. By Samuel Dunbar, M. A., Pastor of the First Church, in Stoughton. Boston: printed and sold by S. Kneeland, in Queen street, M DCC LXIII.’ The preface is ‘by another hand.’

The following extracts are from the preface: ‘By the Word of God, we are taught some fundamental truths, that the light of nature could not give us the least intimations of, but are matters of mere Revelation. Among which are the doctrines of a Mediator: his Atonement for sin; his raising the dead and final judging the world. The doctrine of our redemption by Jesus Christ is the main subject of all revealed religion, and the substance of all divine revelation, from the beginning of our Bible to the end thereof.’ ‘As the corruption of the best things is the worst, so the Word of God, which is so rich a blessing to a guilty world, perishing in ignorance and darkness, when it is corrupted is very pernicious and destructive to the souls of men: instead of directing them in the true way to heaven, it leads them blindfold down to hell. There are none surer of the devil’s snare, than those who wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.’ ‘Those that corrupt the Word of God, in any of the essential articles of it, destroy their own souls; but the ministers of the gospel, who have the care of other men’s souls, as well as their own, and whose business it is to show men the way of salvation, if they corrupt the Word of God, they destroy not only their own souls, but the souls of others also. Instead of guiding them to heaven and happiness, they lead them blindfold to ruin and destruction: which greatly aggravates their guilt, and will increase their future torment.’ The preface closes as follows: ‘May Mr. Grosvenor, at whose ordination this sermon was preached, take it as a seasonable caution to himself, and bear it in mind all his days; so that he may not be of the number of those many, who corrupt the Word of God; but may always preach the plain truths of the gospel in their purity and simplicity! May he be long continued a burning and shining light, in the golden candlestick where he is placed! And may the people of his charge profit savingly by his ministry, and rejoice together hereafter in the day of Christ’s glorious appearing!’

The Sermon is founded on 2 Cor. 2: 17, — ‘We are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God.’ It commences with this sentence: ‘Next to the two greatest mercies of God to a sinful and perishing world, namely, the giving his Son to obtain redemption for all his people, and sending his

Spirit to make application of it to them, is the revelation of this his saving purpose in his Word.' The doctrine inculcated is, 'that it highly concerns the ministers of God's Word to be exceeding careful, that in their ministry they do not corrupt the Word of God.' Here, Mr. Dunbar says, are 'two propositions I would speak to, for clearing the point. I. There are some in the ministry who corrupt the Word of God. II. It highly concerns the ministers of God's Word to be exceeding careful that they do not corrupt it.' Under the first proposition he says, 'There are more especially three ways of doing this: either by adding to the Word, or by detracting from, or by wresting the Word of God, and forcing it to a meaning never intended by God.' He enlarges under each method, and then adds, 'Now it is notorious, that many preachers of the Word do, in one or other of these ways, corrupt it. The contrary articles of faith which they hold, preach, and print, as to election, regeneration, justification, and the like, one side affirming them to be the doctrines of the gospel; the other as strenuously denying them to be so, that is, as to the meaning of them; and each side alleging Scripture, and fetching their arguments thence, for the vindication and support of their principles; it being impossible that both sides should have the truth, because they are diametrically opposite, it is plain, there must be some corrupting of the Word,—some wresting of the Scriptures; for the Word of God is a pure fountain, and cannot send forth sweet water and bitter. Truth and falsehood can no more proceed from the Word of God, than light and darkness can from the sun.' He says, that 'charity obliges us to think,' that many corrupt the Word 'from ignorance,'—'but as to many others, I do not know that it would be any breach of charity to suppose, that they do it with design, and purely to vindicate and support some erroneous notions they have imbibed and have a favor for.' 'The pride of carnal reason is one great incitement to men's corrupting the Word of God.' 'The enmity of men's carnal hearts is another. A vain affectation of novelty and singularity may be a prevailing motive with some. A man-pleasing humor is another temptation to corrupt the Word of God. The doctrines and laws of God's Word are most cross to the vanity of men's minds, and to the lusts of their hearts. The things of the Spirit are mere foolishness to the natural man. The doctrines of the Word are too mysterious; the commands are too strict; the threatenings are too severe; therefore carnal men cannot endure sound doctrine. They are offended at preaching the truths of God, and virtually say to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things: prophesy deceits; preach any thing to us but the truths of God. And therefore, that they may give no offence, and that they may please men, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. Instead of showing in their doctrine uncorruptness, sincerity, and sound speech, that cannot be condemned, they study to avoid those truths that they apprehend will be ungrateful to their people; or to handle them in such a perverted, unscriptural manner, as may be pleasing to them. Hereby they may think to serve and advance their temporal interest; as they that mix water with wine, enhance their gain, and use flattering words as a cloak of covetousness. This view to their worldly interest has no small influence upon those who, for filthy lucre, a fat benefice, a good living, took the oversight of a flock of Christ to corrupt the Word.'

Under the second proposition, he says, of ministers, 'Sometimes they are settled among a people that cannot bear sound doctrine. They are offended at the plain preaching of Gospel truths; they have itching ears, and want to hear some new doctrine; or they dislike the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the Word. In such cases, a minister is under a strong temptation, either wholly to pass them by, and to shun delivering the whole counsel of God, or to adulterate them, thereby to make them palatable and

pleasing to them.' 'Besides, the good old doctrines of the gospel are now, with many, much out of credit; and to preach them, exposes to the contempt and censures of the world. They will be looked upon as weak brethren, of low attainments, and unacquainted with, and unskilful in, the modern, polite, and rational way of preaching. And to those who love the praise of men, this is no little temptation to corrupt the Word, and to espouse the principles, and imitate the preaching of those who are of highest reputation, whether it be consonant to Scripture or not.'

'Besides, in their taking the ministry upon them, they virtually and implicitly, if not expressly and explicitly, promise to preach the Word, and that only, and truly, and wholly; declaring nothing but the counsel of God, and all that. But if, after this solemn promise to God and his people, they, through carelessness or wilfulness, corrupt the Word of God, they will be found liars unto God. To lie unto men, is bad; but to lie unto God, is most heinous and presumptuous wickedness. So Peter thought it, when he told Ananias, "thou hast not lied unto men only, but unto God."

'Farther, ministers corrupting the Word of God, will be likely to do a great deal of mischief to the souls of men. The design of their ministry is to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and then to be helpers of their faith and joy. But, by corrupting the Word of the gospel, they will, probably, defeat the end of their ministry; for it cannot be expected that God's blessing will accompany their unsound doctrine; but rather, that God will blast their ministry, and curse all their labors; since he hath threatened, that such false teachers shall not profit his people at all. Nor is this all, — that they shall do them no spiritual good; but they are like to do them much spiritual hurt; for many, partly through their natural disgust of divine truth, and partly from love and reverence to them, will be ready to suck in greedily their errors; by which they will be more confirmed in their dislike of, and opposition to, the truths of the gospel, and hardened in wickedness. When false teachers bring in gross errors, and even damnable heresies, there will be found many following their pernicious ways; readily drinking in, and stiffly defending, and zealously propagating their erroneous tenets. Their word will eat, as doth a canker, — will spread far and wide, and enter deep. If there should be any that will not receive the Word, as it is corrupted by them, yet it may be a great stumbling and offence to them. And ought not these considerations, the unprofitableness of their ministry, and the mischief that erroneous doctrines may do, excite them to the greatest carefulness, that they do not, in their preaching, or any of their conversation, corrupt the Word of God?

'This corrupting the Word of God is likely to render their ministry uncomfortable to themselves, as well as unprofitable to their people. What true spiritual comfort can ministers enjoy, when they are conscious to themselves, that for some sordid ends, they are corrupters of the Word of God? Must they not have very uneasy reflections upon themselves! Must not such passages of the Word, wherein God threatens those priests that were partial in the law, to be made contemptible and bare before all the people; and that if any pervert the gospel of Christ, and preach any other gospel, he shall be accursed, — spoil all that poor little satisfaction they may take in winning over some few deluded souls to their opinions? And as this corrupting the Word of God tends to cut them off from all inward spiritual comfort, so it leaves them but little room to expect any outward temporal comfort. Though possibly they may, and probably will, proselyte some of the more weak and ignorant, or some of the more careless and vicious, yet it is very likely that the more serious and judicious and godly among their people will be grieved and offended, and protest against their erroneous doctrines, and withdraw from their ministry; and after awhile seek their removal from them. And when matters are come to this pass between a

minister and his people, methinks he can enjoy but very little comfort among them. Nor is this any imaginary inconvenience,—but the late times have afforded instances to prove this uncomfortable issue of ministers corrupting the Word of God.

‘But if ministers can make a shift to enjoy some false peace in their own minds, and some peace among their people, notwithstanding their corrupt preaching, yet this corrupting the Word of God brings them under the heaviest guilt, and exposes them to a greater damnation. They cannot but know, that it doth so. The Word of God sets forth the heinous wickedness of false prophets and teachers, and denounces terrible woes and threatenings against them. And if any set of men shall in hell have a greater damnation than another, wicked, unfaithful ministers bid fair for it. Of them it is said, that their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not; but they bring upon themselves swift destruction. These are the wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. The false prophet shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and be tormented for ever and ever. Oh, what an aggravated damnation must theirs be, who have done so great wickedness, in corrupting the Word of God, against so much light and knowledge,—against their own solemn promises and engagements; and thereby have been accessory to overthrowing the faith of some, and perhaps to their eternal destruction! Oh, this sin of ministers, in perverting the gospel, is very great; and their punishment, except they repent, will be very tremendous! These several foregoing considerations evidently prove, that it highly concerns the ministers of the Word of God to be exceeding careful, that in their ministry they do not corrupt the Word of God.’

The Sermon closes with a ‘brief address’ to the Pastor elect. We are unable to give any full quotations from this, as the copy in our possession is wanting one or more pages,—having suffered from the effects of use and age. Enough, however, is preserved to show, that it was through the ‘urgency’ and ‘importunity’ of Mr. Grosvenor, that Mr. Dunbar preached this Ordination Sermon. We may, therefore, believe, that Mr. Grosvenor agreed, in general, with the views entertained by its author; and also, with those expressed in the preface. If so, he evidently believed in ‘the atonement for sin,’ or ‘our redemption by Jesus Christ,’ as ‘the main subject of all revealed religion.’ He also believed in a ‘devil,’ and ‘hell’ as well as heaven,—in ‘election, regeneration, and justification;’ in a ‘mediator, the resurrection and final judgment;’ ‘the enmity of men’s carnal heart by nature;’ ‘the inspiration of the Scriptures,’ and that they contain ‘truths which are necessary to salvation.’ Such were, evidently, some of the doctrines of Mr. Grosvenor, and, consequently, of the church who called him to the pastoral office by their free election. Mr. Grosvenor was Pastor of this Church from 1763 till 1780. With such a minister in the First Parish for seventeen years, is it probable that Unitarianism was then the prevailing religion of this Church, or even of the Parish?

NOTE E. [Referred to on p. 50.]

[The following letter was sent after both parties had considered the Correspondence 'finished.' It is thought just and proper, however, that it should be appended, with such *Notes* as the case seemed to require.]

SCITUATE, Oct. 31, 1844.

Rev. Daniel Wight, Jr.:

Dear Sir:—On my return home, Saturday evening, Oct. 19th, your roll of nine sheets, closely written, and commenced Sept. 30th, was handed me at the post-office. I have been since most of the time absent from home, and could not give the attention to so lengthy a communication requisite to an understanding of its contents. Notwithstanding your announcement that our Correspondence is 'finished,' I cannot refrain setting some of the contents of the nine sheets in their proper light.

I cannot but think your quotation from the Revised Statutes as very unfortunate for your case. 'The respective churches, connected and associated in public worship with such parishes and religious societies.' (Chap. 20, sec. 3.) 'Connected and associated,' not disconnected and separated from, as was the case with your First Church.* Now, Sir, examine the Revised Statutes as much as you please, you will find no provisions respecting churches, unless as connected with parishes and societies,†—nothing about qualifications of church voters,—church meetings,‡ or any authority given them to settle or dismiss ministers, or to make or annul a contract.§ A church is an association for religious purposes *only*, and for such purposes wants no civil powers; and any exercise of such powers—such as settling or dismissing a minister—is an assumption of power not warranted by law.

As you have quoted civil law, allow me to continue to quote.¶ 'A church has no power to contract with or to settle a minister; but that power resides wholly in the parish, of which the members of the church, who are inhabitants, are a part.' (*Term Rep.* vol. 9, page 277.)

'When the majority of the members of a Congregational Church separate from the majority of the parish, the minority who remain with the parish, constitute the church in such parish, and retain the rights and property thereof.' (*Term Rep.* vol. 16, page 488.)

* Not so. My correspondent himself testifies (page 13) that there was 'a certificate in the hands of the Parish clerk, certifying that they had formed themselves into another Society. This is dated April 15, 1825.' Error is always clashing! Now if the First Church had withdrawn from the *old* Society and formed a *new* one, they could proceed to dismiss their own Pastor, as such, in harmony with both civil and ecclesiastical authority.

† We need none, it seems, in this case.

‡ Because these matters are conceded to the church, where the power for regulating its own ecclesiastical affairs, most evidently belongs.

§ Where has this power of civil contract been asserted or implied, either in the 'Church Manual' or Correspondence?

¶ Quote what? Instead of *legislative enactments*, here follows a trio of *judicial decisions*!

‘A church, not connected with any congregation or religious society, has no legal qualities, and can exercise no control over property.’ (*Term Rep.* vol. 16, page 488)*

* Let us examine these decisions with all due respect. The first and third touch not our case in the least, as we have not assumed the *civil* right of contracts, and our Church has been connected with some Society for generations. The second judicial decision, quoted from the ‘Term Reports,’ requires further notice. Let us read it attentively, and then apply it to the case in Reading, (pages 37, 38,) to the case in Framingham, (page 38,) the case in Dedham, in Old Cambridge, Bedford, and elsewhere. Now is this just and right? Ought the sixty or seventy members of the church in Reading to give up their plate and records to those three women? their new house to the three or four pew-holders? Ought the large and wealthy church in Framingham to give up their all—their valuable plate, records, and if ten thousand dollars had been left them the week before by one of their own number,—to give up their all to this one old lady? So in other cases. But such is the venerable Judge’s decision! Again, compare this decision with the statute of the Legislature, quoted in full on page twenty-four. Read this also attentively, and see if ‘churches have, exercise, and enjoy all their accustomed privileges and liberties, respecting church order and discipline,’ and whether they are ‘encouraged’ in these things. How compares the decision with the statute? Hear the opinion of a Judge in a neighboring State. ‘The late Chief Justice [Parsons] decides that to be an inhabitant of the parish is *not* a necessary qualification of a church member; an opinion which, if just, and it is as just as the practice is uniform, prostrates, from the root, the principle assumed by this court, that those who withdraw from the society cease to be members of that particular church.’

Indeed, it has been affirmed, and we believe with justice, that the views of Judge Parker (which are in some respects self-contradictory,) ‘are totally inconsistent, not only with the natural rights of the churches, but with their corporate rights, and with existing laws’—‘wholly inconsistent with the independence of the churches’—‘inconsistent with Scripture and with the institution of Christ’—‘are too evidently of a *sectarian* character’—and ‘inconsistent with *previous decisions*.’ Chief Justice Parsons tells us, that ‘a church and parish are bodies with different powers’—that ‘the deacons are made a corporation to hold property for the use of the church, and they are accountable to the members,’ &c. The same things were admitted by Unitarians themselves, in 1806. (See ‘The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review,’ for November, 1806.) ‘But it will be remembered that the constitution and *laws*, so far as they relate to the questions at issue, remain the same, [as in 1806,] and that the rights of the

I might continue quotations of this kind,* showing that the Church-meeting which dismissed Rev. Mr. Thomas, amounted to no more than the meeting of the same number of individuals for that purpose in any or the most remote part of the State; but here is enough. 'Now *is it* evident from the above, to a demonstration, that the secession of certain persons from a *society* does not, in the least, affect their church standing,' as members of a particular church?†

An attempt was made several years ago, by some, to give churches the power to settle and dismiss ministers, and otherwise control societies, contrary to law, by putting the meeting-houses in trust.‡ The pew-holders, holding their pews, subject to a condition that the church should have said powers, regardless of the society. An eminent jurist, at the time, denied the validity of such trust deeds, on the ground that no person could relinquish rights secured to him by the constitution, in any way so that he might not resume them at will. And I believe that the plan of trust deeds is

churches are the same now as then. The progress of Unitarian light, however great and glorious it may have been, has not altered one letter of the statute-book, and has not impaired or confirmed the chartered rights of the churches in this Commonwealth. The truth is, there is no disguising it, the plan which in its operations goes to break down the churches, to take from them the right of election, and deprive them of their property, their communion furniture and records, had not been started in 1806. It had not been thought of, so far as appears, except perhaps by a select few. Consequently, Unitarians at that period interpreted the laws, and regarded the rights of the churches in the same manner as others. But the times have changed, and interests have changed, and legal opinions have changed, so that what was *law* and *right* in 1806, is now, by the same statutes, illegal and *wrong*!' Now is it right, that we should abandon all our funds, plate, records, and all, to 'a little sect, which, scarcely thirty years ago, had not courage or honesty enough to admit that they had a being;' when even Judge Parker, in the Dedham case, admits, 'There may undoubtedly be donations to a church, which, from the *nature* of the property given, ought to be considered to be in trust for *church uses*, such as *furniture* for a communion table, a baptismal font, &c. The particular use, implied from the nature of the property given, should, in such case, exclude any *claim of the parish or society*, as such, to such property.' (*Term Reports*, vol. 16, page 496.) Surely 'we ought to talk no more of *liberty*, until this foul stain on our jurisprudence is wiped away.'

* And to what purpose, if as inapplicable or unjust as the above?

† Most evidently, from what has already been said.

‡ This shows into what consternation the evangelical churches were thrown by such unjust decisions!

entirely abandoned,* from the general belief that, even if a person could relinquish his own constitutional rights, he could not relinquish the rights of his posterity or any others

Permit me here to notice a misquotation from my letter. You say, 'If a church and society are two things, capable of being severed, as you say they were, years ago.' I have said or written no such thing.†

But Orthodox clergymen, even, do not hold to this church power, for which you so strenuously contend, if a different doctrine better subserves their purpose. In the town of Wareham, as I am informed, some of the members of Mr. Nott's church, about one year ago, became dissatisfied with him, and called an ecclesiastical council, who recommended his dismissal. At a church meeting, where great exertions were used on both sides to rally their forces, the male members, by one majority, voted to dismiss Mr. Nott. (By the way, are not female members properly voters in churches?‡) Mr. Nott having three fourths or more of the society with

* Says a distinguished minister of England, 'When the Church's enemies are very daring and threatening, it is the wisdom and duty of the Church's friends to apply themselves to God, to appeal to Him, and leave their cause with Him.'

† A mere quibble! I placed the quotation marks to include only the words 'severed' and 'years ago.' It is true, however, that I applied these expressions to the phrase 'church and society,' instead of 'church and state,' but with evident propriety. For a society is a mere creature of the state, and is endowed, as such, with only *civil* functions. The *state* cannot give what it does nor possess, namely: ecclesiastical functions. The term 'state' seems to include all civil authority, as the 'church' all ecclesiastical — while a 'society,' created by an *act* of the state, includes but a measure of civil authority. If, then, 'the state,' or all civil power, is, in this country, 'severed' from 'the church' or ecclesiastical power, then also must a 'society,' regularly organized, be severed from 'the church.' It is absurd to say that a part of a thing is not severed, when we admit that the whole has been. Churches and societies are usually organized on different days, keep distinct journals, and are often composed of different persons, though they may unite in some specific acts, as public worship, &c. Hence. I was not particular whether I used the term state or society in this connection. I leave others, then, to judge how much *provocation* I have given for such an abrupt reply. But my correspondent, it seems, would be understood to deny that a church and society are two things, capable of having a separate existence!

‡ 'All questions are decided by the votes of *the brethren*: the majority in all cases governing.' 'It is utterly inconsistent with established usage for *females* to take any part in *business transactions*. Their views and wishes are to be expressed privately to their pastor or their brethren. We suffer not a woman to speak in the church, agreeably to apostolic injunction.' (1 Cor. 14:

him, and counting his whole church, male and female, a majority of his church, took no notice of the vote, and continued his duties as pastor. Here was a case precisely similar to Mr. Thomas's, except all the parties in Wareham were Orthodox. This state of things continued in Wareham until about a month since, when another council was called, who decided that Mr. Nott should continue as pastor, and, I believe, did not even censure him for his contumacious refusal to comply with the vote of dismissal.* Now, Sir, take the civil law, as quoted above, and the Wareham case, where, by ecclesiastical authority, a vote of a majority of a church was considered a nullity, and you will cease your exclamation of 'absurdity' at my assertion, 'that after their secession they had no further control,' &c.†

You dislike my saying, Massasoit's grandson, instead of Philip's son,—call it 'sophistry, if nothing worse,' and go on to quote nearly a page from Bancroft, to show the suffering caused by Philip's war; and, it would seem, almost bring yourself to justify the treatment of this harmless child,‡ and the execution and sale into slavery of many of his tribe. Look at things as they were.§ Here was an innocent child, grandson of Massasoit, as well as son of Philip; the tribe to which he belonged exterminated; his father killed; his mother a captive. Be the disposition of the child what it might, he had no power, in any way, to injure the whites. He was in their hands, at an age when they could educate him,—form his mind as they chose.|| Now, is it possible, the treatment he received can be justified by a Christian? The 'ministers' were applied to, and you give at length the advice of Mr. Cotton and Mr. Arnold, in which they name from Scripture several persons

34, 35.) Note. 'All deviations from the course described in the text, are spots upon the fair and scriptural practice of our churches.' *Punchard, on Congregationalism*. p. 126.

* Having written to Rev. Mr. Nott for the facts in this case, and having freely conversed with one of the ministers, on that council which advised the dismissal of Mr. Nott, who has also read the above statement by my correspondent, I am authorized to say that it is *essentially incorrect*. As this peculiar case, however, 'as yet is plainly unfinished,' it should have no influence upon our own, unless it be to confirm the *regular and established usage*.

† The preceding notes clearly show, that all the grounds of 'absurdity' still remain undisturbed.

‡ No further than the facts and circumstances go.

§ That was what I attempted in my last; but my correspondent kept the whole out of sight. Was not this sophistry? The *circumstances* under which Mario killed the dog decide the moral character of the act.—See *Watts on the Mind*, chap. 16.

|| I believe this is not always a very easy matter, especially with an Indian, whose relatives and tribe had been thus treated. Revenge is a prominent characteristic of the Indian. As this lad had grown up, who could foretell his disposition, or know how many of the neighboring tribes he might stir up to gratify this revenge. I do not, however, fully justify this treatment, inflicted by the *civil* authorities, but I wish to look candidly 'at things as they were,' that we be not unnecessarily severe.

(doubtless, in their opinions, not so bad as Philip,) 'the children of whom were cut off by the sword of justice for the transgression of their parents, although, concerning some of those children, it be manifest that they were not capable of being actors therein.' Here, so great is your exultation, you break off before giving the 'more lenient' advice of Mr. Keith,* and say, 'Here is nothing said about sending into slavery, or, indeed, whether Philip's son should be executed at all.' 'Sophistry,' indeed, 'if nothing worse!' † What is the plain and obvious meaning of Messrs. Cotton and Arnold? 'The children of such offenders should be cut off by the sword of justice.' This innocent and harmless boy should be executed, ‡ because he was Philip's son! Enough of this.

But to come to the main point, in your estimation, and, as it seems, the whole cause of your claiming to be the First Church, namely, *the funds*. You say, 'Our Trinitarian ancestors left property to the amount of some thousands of dollars, to this First Church and the Society connected with it, for the support of their religion, which we have seen is something so diametrically opposite to Unitarianism. This fund was left principally, if not entirely, near a century before Calvinism lost the ascendancy in the town,' and you add, 'It is doubted whether you will openly dare go so far [as the slaveholders] in support of your claim to our funds.' § Truly modest. Again. 'Now, is there no morality, or rather immorality, in snatching the children's bread, left by their fathers, and giving it to strangers?' Once more. 'You, and others associated with you, may rest contented (so far as I am concerned) [thank you] 'to feed on another's bread, till conscience and a sense of duty may lead you to relinquish our funds, with interest, to the First Church of Christ in Scituate and the Society connected with it.' A person ought to have strong grounds for such language as this. || After this great display of modesty and unassuming meekness on your part, I am constrained to say, as appears by records, First, — the First Church, as such, never exercised or had any control, management, or direction whatever of the funds, ¶ as they would have done had they owned them; and never

* Did Rev. Mr. Keith advise to send this lad into 'hopeless slavery?' I do not know, and I believe history does not inform us, but that *his* advice was to 'educate' the child, and 'form his mind as they chose.'

† Yes, truly, both sophistry and a false statement, as now fully appears.

‡ Not 'sold to hopeless slavery.'

§ It now appears that my doubts were well founded; no such claim is pretended in what follows.

|| And most surely we have 'strong grounds.'

¶ Then the Rev. Mr. Deane has made *another* 'false statement,' or my correspondent has made one! Mr. Deane says, in his 'History,' (p. 33.) that 'the farm was given to the Church. The same year (1654) the Church entered into negotiation with Mr. Chauncy, and, as appears, had so much encouragement, that they should prevail over his inclination to leave them, that a deed of the farm was made to Mr. Chauncy, and put upon record. He however left them at the close of 1654. We have seen no writings on record, by which the farm was then relinquished to the

claimed them, or thought of claiming them, so far as is known, until after

Church, and by the Church to the Society, but such relinquishments, we understand, were made.' Also, 'in 1661, Mr. Hatherly gave his house and land at Farm Neck, 'for the use of the ministry.' To whom? Mr. Deane also says, in his 'History,' (p. 175,) 'In 1654, Mr. Hatherly, the untiring patron of the plantation, offered to make a deed of gift to Mr. Chauncy, of a house and land on "Satuit Brook," on condition that Mr. Chauncy agreed to spend his life in Scituate, which offer he declined. Mr. Hatherly then makes the deed *to the Church*, and submits the farm *to their disposal*. The same year the Church conveys it to Mr. Chauncy, by deed of gift, signed probably by most of the male members, namely, Timothy Hatherly, Thomas Chittenden,' and eighteen others. 'Though this was given without any condition to be performed on Mr. Chauncy's part, at least, specified in the deed, yet, on his retiring at the close of the same year, the farm seems to have been relinquished *to the Church*.' Some things here appear very loosely stated, and need investigation; but taking the account as here given, either Mr. Deane or Col. Turner has made a false statement; which of the two, I leave for others to decide.

The following facts, however, may be here stated: 'From 1631 till 1662, none were entitled to the right of suffrage, or could be chosen or appointed to any office, who were not members of some regularly established church.' 'By a law in 1668, it was ordered and declared, that "by the church is meant such as are in full communion only," and all others are prohibited from voting at their elections.' 'In 1646, the *number* of those not connected with the churches in Massachusetts and Plymouth,' is represented by 'thousands.' In these days, parishes, as such, did not exist, except as churches. But 'the churches exercised parochial authority. They had similar corporate powers to those which parishes now exercise.' They 'built and owned the first meeting-houses,' and 'had the power of raising money by tax for the support of their pastors.' 'Those that were no members were taxed to maintain the minister of the place they belonged unto.' 'In the act of 1641, respecting the gathering of churches, no mention is made of their being connected with parishes or towns. In the acts of 1642, 1646, and 1658, all in one way or another respecting churches, we find no mention made of parishes or towns.' 'In 1665, some modification took place as to the civil powers of the inhabitants, but still under close restrictions, as to certificates of character,' &c. 'It does not appear that any others voted (except church members) respecting the settlement of ministers, till after the Provincial charter in 1691.' 'In the celebrated act of 1754, at least, in that part of it which relates to church property, no mention is made of parishes or towns; and

the 'eleven' joined the Church. 'Our funds!'^{*} Secondly, — the First Parish, as such, *bought* part of the funds,[†] and, from the earliest times, always

in those acts of the colonial and provincial legislatures, which do speak of the connection between church and town or parish, this connection is spoken of merely as matter of fact, and not as one of necessity to the church. We might quite as well infer from these laws generally, that a town or parish cannot subsist without a church, as that a church cannot subsist unless connected with some town or parish.'

From the above quotations it will appear, that, at the time the donations were made to the Church in Scituate, by Messrs. Hatherly and Chauncy, there was in existence no Parish or incorporated Society, distinct from the Church, except the town corporation. If these funds, therefore, were given to any *body corporate*, separate from the town, (and none will pretend they were given to the town,) they must have been given to the Church, and been managed by the Church, at least for a time. Churches have remained bodies corporate from that time to the present, as may be seen from all the *acts* passed on the subject, including the present revised statute. (See p. 76.) There has been no necessity for the Church in Scituate to put her funds into the hands of the Parish, and we have seen no writings, nor does Mr. Deane mention any, by which the Church relinquished Mr. Hatherly's donations (especially that of 1661) to the Parish. With regard to the former, he says, 'we have seen no writings, but we understand,' &c. This authority is as good here, as in regard to the history of 'The Separation;' being the same.

But I may here remark, further, that if there were a formal or informal relinquishment (of the management?) of these funds into the hands of the Parish, was it not with the implied, if not written proviso, that they should be sacredly appropriated to the support of Calvinistic preaching? (All the Congregational churches were then Calvinistic.) If so, (and who can doubt that this proviso was implied, if not written,) what does true righteousness demand of this Society? Evidently the moral, and therefore the highest claim, with men who fear God rather than man, lies with the Church.

^{*} While they were faithfully managed in accordance with the wishes of the donors and the Church, there was no occasion for complaint. But when the latter saw the great perversion of these funds, it was *the time* to raise their voice in reproof. They could not feel that they were honest men, if they saw in silence the funds left by their pious ancestors perverted to overthrow, if possible, the faith and Church which those holy men had cherished. If such things are to be allowed and *justified*, truly may we exclaim with Cicero; 'O tempora! O mores!'

[†] 'Bought part of the funds!' probably as Mr. Deane says:

possessed, managed, and controlled them, — sold and gave deeds, from time to time, as the money was wanted for parish purposes. ‘Our funds!’ You might just as well claim the Bank of England as ‘our funds.’*

But you say the funds were left by Trinitarians, — you are Trinitarians, therefore they are yours. Why these funds, more than any others, left by Trinitarians in the State? And why do you take this one particular tenet as the one to give you a title? There were others considered by our ancestors equally important, many of them so nice that I cannot quote them, without turning to history, and which Calvinists of the present day do not believe.

Mr Deane, in his ‘History,’ says, ‘The first settlers of Scituate were men of intelligence and education.’ They were, then, doubtless, of the opinion of the worthy Robinson, as expressed to the Pilgrims in his farewell sermon, when they were about to leave Holland for America. Said he, ‘I charge you before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his Holy Word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed Churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will, at present, go no further than the instruments of their reformation. Luther and Calvin were great and shining lights in their times; yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God. I beseech you, remember it, — ’t is an article of your church covenant, that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written Word of God.’ With such views, probably, the part of the funds left by individuals were given, and the donors, if now living, would rejoice to receive the ‘more truth,’ which ‘has broke out of his Holy Word.’†

‘In 1701, they sold all the lands which they owned, as successor to Mr. Chauncy, and built a barn on the parsonage, with the proceeds,’ &c. ‘Mr. Hatherly and the Conihasset partners had given Mr. Chauncy a share in the undivided Conihasset lands; and this share was relinquished to the Church and Society.’ — (Deane’s *History*, pp. 33, 34.)

* It is believed there are many candid and honest Unitarians in Massachusetts, who frown indignantly upon this wholesale robbery of funds, belonging to Orthodox churches, and who would sincerely rejoice to have justice take place.

† ‘The more truth;’ Unitarianism, of course; and Parkerism, and Socialism, and open Infidelity, and what not!! What justice or confidence can be placed in such a principle of interpretation? ‘The donors, if now living, would rejoice,’ (would they?) to embrace and support a system of religious faith ‘so diametrically opposite’ to their own! (The Pilgrims are still represented by nearly fifteen hundred Orthodox Congregational churches, in New England alone.) This is not so easy a thing for good, honest, pious men to do! Their principles and spirit lie too deep within, for so complete a reverse. Such changes are easier for those who look chiefly at externals. But my correspondent cannot speak in too high terms of our ‘worthy Robinson.’ He was, indeed ‘ahead of the age in which he lived,’ though he saw not, approvingly, the peculiar tenets of Unitarianism. The advice he

As to the 'majority.' You come out with two certificates, procured since you commenced the roll of nine sheets, the signers of which avow them-

gave, as quoted above, was excellent — has been remembered, and, we believe, *prudently* followed by his own denomination. They have dropped some of those unessential, nice tenets, which, as 'Calvinists of the present day,' they 'do not believe.' But it is taking too great liberties to suppose, that if Robinson, and Hatherly, and Chauncy, were now alive, they would be good Unitarians, or followers of Rev. Mr. Parker!

'The first settlers of Scituate were men of intelligence and education.' Very true. Then they must have been acquainted with the peculiar sentiments of Arius, and Pelagius, and Socinus, and others, who espoused the principal doctrines of modern Unitarianism. But these doctrines they discarded as heretical, and subversive of the gospel; embracing views, on these points, 'diametrically opposite.' But few will admit, that the great and peculiar principles of Unitarianism, are quite as modern as my correspondent seems to imply. Why, then, should the funds they left be appropriated to the very subversion of the fundamental articles of their 'intelligent' faith? It is 'ridiculous' and almost insupportable, to hear modern Unitarians, as we often do, claiming such men as Robinson, and Chauncy, and many others of our early ancestors, as good Unitarians, or 'would be such,' if living in 'these enlightened times.' But the climax of provocation is superadded, when the legacies of such men are assumed and expended for Unitarian support! This is a sacrilege and profanation of the ashes of the pious dead, not to be endured. The reader will also here notice how my correspondent employs the same artifice himself, which he so unjustly charges upon the Orthodox, (in introducing Rev. Mr. Nott's case,) using an opposite doctrine, when it 'better subserves their purpose.' In one part of the Correspondence, he will 'not admit,' 'that decrees of assemblies of divines of this age, and this stamp, are entitled to the least consideration;' but before he closes, it is repeatedly 'the worthy Robinson,' — 'the first settlers of Scituate were men of intelligence and education,' — 'doubtless of the opinion of the worthy Robinson,' &c., — 'the donors (of the funds), if now living, would rejoice to receive the "more truth,"' &c.

But 'why — take this one particular tenet — Trinitarianism?' By referring to our 'Manual' and the Correspondence, it will be seen we often use the double expression of 'Trinitarian and Calvinistic,' a somewhat broader basis, and sufficiently distinct and descriptive of our denomination, as contrasted with Unitarianism. But further, this 'one tenet,' as it is called, involves several others, if not my whole catalogue, 'commencing with "total depravity," and ending with "the absolute eternity of future pun-

selves to be Trinitarians. To one of them you are welcome.* Mr. Vinal was a worthy man. I was often at his house, before he went to the almshouse, and before his mind was impaired, and never heard any one of the liberal party express themselves so strongly on church matters, against the course pursued by the seceding party, as I have heard him. Since then, as I am informed, his mind is, in a measure, gone, and he, perhaps, would sign almost any certificate you wanted.† I took numbers from your 'Manual,'

ishment ;'' for the more intelligent will perceive, that a denial of the Trinity is the denial of Christ's supreme divinity, and the atonement made by his sufferings and death. This almost necessarily leads to the denial of total depravity, which includes the necessity of regeneration ; and when these doctrines are all laid aside, the eternity of future punishment is easily doubted, if not absolutely denied. Justification by faith alone, the great doctrine of the Reformation as well as of *the New Testament*, is also completely set aside by the above rejections ; and when we get thus far, the step to Parkerism is short, and then easy to Socialism and open Infidelity ! This is not mere declamation, but follows legitimately from the premises, as shown by various writers and by common observation. Not a few, having abandoned revelation, and trusting to their own darkened understandings, have gone this whole length in error, while others, having seen the abyss into which they were about to plunge, have shrunk back, some we hope upon *terra firma*, but others still stand upon the trembling quagmire, that close surrounds the pit.

'Facilis descensus Averni :

Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis :

Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,

Hoc opus, hic labor est.'

VIRGIL.

Our moral and just claim, then, either as Trinitarians, or as Trinitarians and Calvinists, is sufficiently broad and distinct. But 'why these funds, more than any others left by Trinitarians in the State ?' For the plain reason, that these were left to the First Church of Christ in *Scituate*, and not to that in Dedham, or elsewhere !

* We hope, then, that he will be no longer counted with the minority.

† And perhaps *not*. Hear the following testimony, from the most credible authority :—'This may certify, that I have been intimately acquainted with Mr. Simeon Vinal from his earliest years, and can say, that from the time of his making a public profession of religion, [July, 1823,] he has sustained a fair moral and religious character. From repeated conversation with him, personally, in regard to the Separation and Church difficulties in 1825, I believe and feel assured, that he was friendly to the

supposing it correct, in that particular; which, if these certificates are to be relied on, appears not to be the case.* But, to make this matter short, as I have other things to notice, and do not intend to cover nine sheets, I say that, even if I admit the certificates, your plural, in your preface, should give place to the singular. Instead of 'two or three' false statements, you make no attempt to sustain more than one.†

I should understand, from the general tenor of your communication, that churches and church members were about the only subjects worthy of note in this world. 'Parishes and societies are something *added*, not the original

major part of the Church which seceded, and approved of their action in this respect. Soon after the Separation I met with Mr. Vinal, and he inquired particularly as to our prosperity and prospects, and said that he intended to join us after we had obtained a settled Pastor. Both before and after the separation, he frequently attended Calvinistic preaching, and appeared gratified with such instruction. The probable reason why he did not fully join with us, I have always believed, was owing to domestic difficulties, and a measure of *dependence* on others. I have frequently seen Mr. Vinal in later years, and once within a very few weeks, and have noticed no particular failure in his memory or other faculties, above what is common to most men of his years, [about 75.] In my late visit he seemed to relate circumstances and events, which transpired years ago, with propriety and accuracy. I will here also say, that I have heard read attentively the above Correspondence and Notes, prepared for the press by Rev. Mr. Wight, and can testify that his statements, so far as they relate to the Separation, funds, &c., are correct, according to the best of my information and recollection, and that I cordially approve of their publication. ELEAZAR PEAKES.

'Scituate, Dec. 19th, 1844.'

* Most certainly it can. The numbers, however, given in the 'Manual,' were there given for another purpose: to establish the majority in Mr. Thomas's dismissal; not in adopting the covenant,—two very different acts. But it is immediately added, that 'several more of this minority withdrew soon after;' and in my second letter, (page 11,) that they 'united with Trinitarian churches.'

† Most certainly I do. I relinquished discussion on the *third* false statement only, as will be clearly seen by referring to the letters. The first and second, as examined on both sides, and numbered first and secondly, are distinct and well defined. The third was relinquished, not that I yielded its falsity, but because it was considered as 'immaterial, and unworthy of dispute;' and also, because that we both agreed that the secession took place in April, 1825, but which the paragraph under examination represents as taking place 'at that time,' namely, 'in A. D. 1824.'

root.* I cannot, myself, think that church membership, without the practice of the Christian virtues, is very valuable. If I am a member of a church, and am deficient in love and charity, — fail in my duties to my fellow-men and to my God, will church membership save me? Or, suppose I believe in all the articles named in your roll, commencing with ‘total depravity,’ and ending with ‘the absolute eternity of future punishment!’ and was otherwise a suitable person for a church member, should offer myself to your Church, and they, by a major vote, reject me, would this vote exclude me from heaven? Far be it from me to discourage any one who, from a sense of duty, or as a means of greater purity of life, wishes to join a church; but, for myself, I cannot but think that substance is more than form, — the practice of the Christian virtues more than the profession only.†

You are much mistaken, in supposing me prejudiced against those who differ from me, ‘especially if ministers.’ Be sure, I do not think that the study of divinity and being ordained as a minister makes *more* than a man of any one; but I could name some ministers of the Baptists, whom I highly esteemed, and have the vanity to think I stood well in their estimation; and some of your predecessors — one, in particular — stood very high in my opinion as a man and a Christian. I used, occasionally, to attend his meetings, and, although he was strictly a Calvinist, had love and charity for others, — firmly, but charitably, maintained his doctrines, but did not condemn others; did not call himself ‘the faithful,’ or think himself infallible,‡ like his Holiness of Rome, — was in every respect, as I thought, a most worthy man.

I have not noticed your wholesale condemnation of me, personally.§ A bigoted Catholic priest might, and probably would, do the same by you, because you differ from him in a few particulars; but would *his* condemnation harm *you*? I might, also, retort, and refer you to Luke, 18: 11, 12, and say, ‘I fear’ you are there described. I might advise you to read

* Very true, as before shown. And if I do place the Church of Christ as a very *prominent* thing in this world, I fear not the reproach. Matt. 6: 33. Ps. 87: 2, 3, &c.

† Quite a cool and deliberate self-justification for living in neglect of some of the plainest commands of Scripture! Acts 2: 38. Luke 22: 19. Matt. 10: 32, 33. 1 Cor. 11: 23–29, &c.

‡ There are some shades of difference between the terms ‘faithful’ and ‘infallible.’ See Eph. 1: 1. Col. 1: 2. 1 Tim. 1: 12, &c.

§ This sentence is wholly unjustified by any language I have used in respect to my correspondent, as may be seen by referring to what I have written. It seems designed merely for effect. I have said, indeed, that he ‘seemed to be one of those described in 1 Cor. 2: 14;’ and that ‘I feared, unless he changed his course and spirit, he would be found at last to have been fighting against God and his people;’ and with what propriety, I leave others to judge. But there is no ‘personal condemnation’ in this. If I go astray, as I am sensible I often do, and another shall admonish me in similar terms, I hope I shall not complain, but receive the admonition thankfully, and improve by it.

the Sermon on the Mount, and ask if you possess the virtues there inculcated, or, in your own phraseology, 'fear' you do not possess them? I might inquire of you, if *your* Bible contains the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and, if it does, whether you ever read it? * But I will do no such thing. To your own Master you stand or fall. I am not your judge.

You say, 'It is no new thing for evil-doers to charge severity upon the faithful, because they declare unto them their sins.' 'At such times, nothing is more common than to claim for themselves a large share of liberality and charity'.† Now, Sir, in no part of the religious exercises conducted by the truly worthy, and, I believe, truly good man, whose ministry I attend, can I more sincerely join, than in his prayers for 'our fellow-Christians worshipping by our sides.' Not 'errorists,' or any other bad epithet, but 'our fellow-Christians.'‡ If this makes an evil-doer, I am one.

* I had said, 'You may trifle with such suggestions now,' &c., and my correspondent has here very genteely taken the permission.

† All this has, doubtless, often been verified.

‡ Though 'gross idolaters' and what not, it is all alike, 'our fellow-Christians!' No matter, evidently, what a man believes, provided he be sincere! With some he is still 'our fellow-Christian,' though he deny the Bible, and even the Lord that made him! Rev. Theodore Parker, of Roxbury is still, I believe, a member of the Unitarian Association, and has exchanged pulpits with his brother ministers, since his notorious South Boston sermon. (We also have the following recent notice of this gentleman in the *Christian Reflector* (Baptist) of Jan. 2d, 1845:— 'Theodore Parker.—The last Thursday Lecture at Chauncy Place was delivered by Mr. Parker, whose ordination sermon at South Boston excited so much attention some two years ago. A report of it appeared next morning in the *Post*, and if that report was correct, we cannot see how even Unitarians can withhold expressions of grief and indignation. He preached on the character of Jesus, and conveyed the impression that his followers esteemed even him too highly. He was a good man, indeed a better man than the world had seen before, but not so good as some who may come after him. Mr. P. believes, that God has *other Christs* in store for the world, who will far surpass Jesus, or all our ideas of Jesus! Think of such blasphemy, uttered in the pulpit of the church planted in tears and prayers by the Puritan fathers of New England—the first church founded in Boston!' Says the 'N. E. Puritan,' relative to this same gentleman, 'Let it be known in all Christendom, that some of the Unitarian clergy of Boston and vicinity still exchange pulpits with Mr. Parker, and allow him to preach the Thursday Lecture, and in various ways uphold him in the character of a minister.') The three churches which worship by the side of the First Parish, are all Trinitarians, and worship 'Christ' as 'over all,

I should like to glance at some other remarks of yours, but have not space.*

Respectfully,

JOHN B. TURNER.

God blessed forever,' (Rom. 9: 5. Heb. 1: 6. Rev. 5: 8-14,) and are, of course, 'gross idolaters,' truly, (1 Cor. 5: 11; 6: 9. Rev. 21: 8; 22: 15.) if Christ be not God. I also love to pray for 'our fellow-Christians, worshipping by our sides,' and would that I could believe, with large charity, that they were still more numerous. But while I pray for fellow-Christians, I must also pray for sinners still unreconciled to God; for those who, we 'fear,' are 'rejecting the counsel of God against themselves,' and 'the stone' which 'has become the head of the corner,' (Luke, 7: 30. Matt. 21: 42. 1 Pet. 2: 6-8.) There is a false charity in the world, which is ruining thousands, which literally becomes 'all things to all men,' whether proper or not, and which makes nothing of principles, of faith, and of doctrine, if a tolerably fair *external* is exhibited. But we might as well attempt to build a beautiful temple with mere shingles and clapboards and paint, without framework beneath, as expect to possess and maintain the gospel of Christ, or its spirit, by mere external morality, without the fixed principles, the doctrines, of the gospel. Now true charity, or holy *love*, 'rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;' and this charity will intreat, and warn, and admonish, and even declare 'the terror of the Lord,' to persuade and save men.

* The 'nine sheets' were still in part reserved, but if the remaining 'contents' are no further from the 'proper light' than those examined, it was prudent to keep them unsoiled. Every new page adds darkness to the picture drawn, to claim Orthodox funds for Unitarian support! Just see how it appears to others abroad. 'A distinguished jurist in a neighboring State,' speaking of the Dedham case, which differs not materially from our own, and that of many others, writes as follows:—

'The Dedham case, so called, was a bold stroke. It astonished me. I first saw it merely touched in a Boston newspaper of the day; and in a letter to one of the judges, my friend, if I know a friend, and one with whom no friendship is broken, I asked whether the statement of the decision as given in the newspaper, could be correct; observing that I hoped not, for, if correct, it seemed to me "a declaration of war against evangelical churches." I wondered to hear so very little said by way of protest against it. I could not suppose that religious sentiment was "dead or asleep."'

After speaking of the published Result of an Ecclesiastical Council at Groton, in which the decision in question is largely

discussed, and having expressed his satisfaction with that discussion, the writer proceeds :—

‘ If I were to find a truth, which might have been better edged and pointed, it would be the concession made in the Dedham case, that “there may undoubtedly be donations *to a church*,” to which “the parish would have no claim,” such as furniture for the communion table, &c., in which case it is certain, that *no person but the church* could have a claim. This concession, which the court had not the courage and the conscience to controvert, cuts up by the roots the whole principle assumed, namely, that the church “could not hold as a corporation.” This assumption, to my understanding, ever appeared to be the whole foundation of the decision; the rest of the case (being 34 pages of Report) seems to be foreign remarks and declamation, tending not to discuss the subject, but to confound or evade it; and even this assumption seems, by the above concession, to be wholly abandoned.’

‘ The judges are great men; as such, I consider and esteem them. But we have wrong notions of great men. Mere greatness does not imply that men, because great, are more free than others from an arithmetical proportion of *errors*; but great men are great in all their parts, as an elephant is greater than a sheep. They have great thoughts, great views, great premises, great conclusions; their demonstrations are great demonstrations; their *errors* are *great errors*; and *that is the difference*.’

The judge of a neighboring State, alluding to the same Dedham case, also writes thus :—‘ A church has been known as a body corporate from the landing of our forefathers at Plymouth; was recognized and confirmed as such by the earliest statutes; was by the law of 1754, which the court copiously quote, expressly empowered, among other things, “to call the deacons to account” respecting their property, “and if need be commence and prosecute any suits touching the same.” It is not shown, that at any time churches have failed to hold property, nor that the right has been doubted.’ He closes by saying, ‘ It is hoped the court will have opportunity to reconsider the decision, if that course is better than a correction by the Legislature.’

The Revised Statute, in regard to churches as bodies corporate, is as follows :—‘ The deacons, church-wardens, or other similar officers of all churches, or religious societies, if citizens of the United States, shall be deemed bodies corporate, for the purpose of taking and holding in succession all grants and donations, whether of real or personal estate, made either to them and their successors, or to their respective churches, or to the poor of their churches.’ Revis. Stat. Part I, Title 8, chap. 20, sec. 39.

The following is a quotation from a writer in England, published in the ‘ Eclectic Review ’ for October, 1830. It shows that

the opinions and state of things there, are not very unlike what they are among us, in some respects. This reviewer observes : — ‘ But the pittance on which the children of the Unitarian minister starves has been filched for him ; his income, or three fourths of it, is the fruit of fraud, the shameless perversion of a testamentary grant. Every shilling, if he be a man of sensibility, must burn his palm as he takes it. The thirty, sixty, hundred pounds per annum, which, if it be not the whole of his salary, is that on which his continuance in his place absolutely depends, was destined by the donor for the maintenance of a doctrine, which the man who receives it is always *laboring to impugn* ! Odious position ! hard service ! The minister who stands in a pulpit under such conditions, might well, as he glances at the tablet dedicated to the memory of the abused dead, imagine that he hears the “ stone out of the wall ” uttering the reproachful taunt, “ He who eateth of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me ! ” ’

But further quotations and arguments are unnecessary. It is believed, that the candid and impartial reader of the foregoing Correspondence and Notes will be prepared to decide, first, that the charge of ‘ false statements made in the history of the town,’ has been sustained ; secondly, that Rev. Mr. Thomas was regularly and truly dismissed as Pastor of the First Church in Scituate, in April, 1825 ; thirdly, that those who dismissed him and their successors are ecclesiastically the First Church of Christ in Scituate ; (this will follow, if the dismissal of Mr. Thomas was real ;) and, fourthly, that the said First Church has the civil, ecclesiastical, and moral claim to the ancient church-records down to April 29th, 1825, (although we have been and are denied the privilege of even looking at them,) with the church plate, and all other exclusive church property then in their possession. Also, that this same Church, and the Society now connected with it, have the moral (if not legal) claim to at least such portion of the original funds as came through the liberality of Mr. Timothy Hatherly and Rev. Charles Chauncy. These were men of Orthodox faith, whose creed covered every article and essential idea in our present Confession of Faith as received by this Church, and which we have seen is ‘ so diametrically opposite ’ to that system, in support of which it is now applied. These were ‘ men of intelligence and education,’ who intelligently rejected the then well known principles of Unitarianism, as before shown, and who could not, therefore, have *designed* their legacies for the overthrow of their own faith, and the support of an ‘ opposite.’ How can honest men, who hold that righteousness is ‘ the central principle ’ of their system, consistently and knowingly make such a perversion of funds, and continue to justify such conduct ? If there are other funds, raised by the town or parish, as such, inde-

pendent of the above donations, we lay no wholesale claim to such funds. They may still continue with the First Parish, if that be just, or be divided among the different Societies which now cover the original territory, if that be more just. But, if my opponent and his associates can hold on upon their 'central principle,' and also upon 'our funds,' — records, plate, and all, — and that too with a good conscience, I will only say, — hold on, but 'fear!'

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